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# **LORD HAYAGRĪVA IN SANSKRIT LITERATURE**

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**THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF  
PHILOSOPHY IN SANSKRIT IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS**

By

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The thesis is the result of Ms. Anindita Adhikari's own investigation. The thesis as a whole or in part, was not submitted to any other university or institution for any research or any other degree and the same has not been published.

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# ABSTRACT



A thorough and comprehensive study of the origin and development of the concept of **Lord Hayagrīva in Sanskrit Literature** demands investigative research. Hayagrīva an incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu comprises of two interrelated terms ‘*Haya*’ the horse and ‘*Grīva*’ the neck of horse that denotes some god whose origin can be traced back in the Vedic literature. However, the first explicit mention of the name Hayagrīva is found in *Hayagrīvopaniṣad* as well as in the *Mahābhārata*.

The thesis consists of seven chapters.

### **Chapter- I Introduction**

A holistic study of the concept of the Hayagrīva *avatāra* and the cult necessitates a look into the origin of the unusual form of Lord Viṣṇu, the symbolic implication behind the concept of Hayagrīva and its expansion into the later Vedic literature. While tracing the antecedent of Lord Hayagrīva in Sanskrit Literature, we first approach the ancient Vedic texts to investigate the underlying concept of Hayagrīva, then move on to the mythological description of Hayagrīva in the great epic *Mahābhārata* and also in different sectarian *Purāṇas*, where we come across iconographical forms and modes of worship in the Vedic, Purāṇic and Tāntrik traditions that continue till date.

### **Chapter- II Hayagrīva in the *Hayagrīvopaniṣad***

Viṣṇu, the great God, a deity holding a comparatively subordinate position in the *R̥gveda*, occupies a prominent place in the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Purāṇas* as a god of mythological characteristics. The commencement of the symbol-worship in the Vedic mantras, the horse as the sun or the sun steed and his relationship with solar god Viṣṇu during the period of the *Samhitās*, the beheading motif of Dadhyañc and Viṣṇu and the connection between the

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ritualistic viewpoint of *pravargya* and the symbolic expression of horse head as Yajña Viṣṇu, is explicit in the myths, rituals, ceremonies and sacrifices in the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Āraṇyakas* that gradually developed into the horse headed deity as supreme lord of knowledge and wisdom in the *Hayagrīvopaniṣad*.

### **Chapter- III Hayagrīva in the Mahābhārata**

The name Hayagrīva appears apparently for the first time in the *Mahābhārata* though the deity finds prominence in the *Hayagrīvopaniṣad* a minor *Upaniṣad* written probably in the post *Mahābhārata* period.

A study of the concept of Hayagrīva in the *Mahābhārata* shows a major mythical description of the celestial horse-headed deity Viṣṇu Hayaśiras as the retriever of the stolen Vedas by subduing the demons Madhu-Kaiṭabha. Hayagrīva has been raised to the prominence as the supreme lord of learning and wisdom in the *Hayagrivopaniṣad* which also accepts the episode of Viṣṇu-Hayagrīva as a retriever of the Vedas. Some other references of Hayamukha, Hayaśira, Asvaśira, and Vaḍavāmukha appear prominently as epithets to Viṣṇu Hayagrīva in the *Mahābhārata*. Focus has been laid on the chronological development of Hayagrīva, on understanding of the concept of myth and a detailed analysis of the central myth of Hayaśira Viṣṇu.

Hayaśira in the *Mahābhārata* and Kṛṣṇa in the *Harivaṃśa* are two manifestations of the supreme Viṣṇu. The *Mahābhārata* refers to the divine Hayaśira, but the *Harivaṃśa* mentions the Hayagrīva as a demon, both being distinct manifestations of energy, one implied as good and the other as evil.

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**Chapter- IV Hayagrīva in Different *Purāṇas***

The analysis of the Hayagrīva concept in different religio-sectarian *purāṇas* has been made in four aspects. The form of Hayagrīva as an *avatāra*, the mythological aspect of Hayagrīva, the iconographical descriptions of Hayagrīva and the mode of Hayagrīva worship. The exploration of the *avatāric* lists in the religio-sectarian *purāṇas*, myths, iconography and the mode of worship of Hayagrīva Viṣṇu reveals the cult of Viṣṇu to be expansive, and the innumerable methods, ways of imagination, belief that create ideas about the Lord, to suit basic requirements and complement the socio-religious system of the time.

**Chapter- V Hayagrīva in the *Devībhāgavata***

Significantly the most elaborate myth of Viṣṇu-Hayagrīva in the *Devībhāgavata purāṇa* shows Devī as the explicit reason behind every cosmic activity. The descriptions of the two Hayagrīvas— one the divine Viṣṇu-Hayagrīva and the other demon Hayagrīva in the same myth lays emphasis on the divine goddess as a central reason behind the curse given to Lord Viṣṇu. Hayagrīva appearance of Lord Viṣṇu caused by Mahā-Lakṣmi's curse not only fulfils the purpose of curse but serves the purpose of peace caused by the killing of the demon Hayagrīva who bagged a boon from Devī only to be killed by Hayagrīva. The similarities of the beheading concept in the Brāhmaṇic myth (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*) and the Purāṇic myth, expanded in the *Devībhāgavata* where aspects of divinity and iniquity in nature, cause, event and consequence of both mortals and immortals appear as unavoidable complexities designed for good and reform.

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### **Chapter- VI Hayagrīva in the Yoginī Tantra**

A glimpse into the *Yoginī Tantra* offers the details of the origin of the stone image of Hayagrīva Mādhava, the iconographic descriptions, mode of worship revealing the esoteric practices with *tantra* sacraments of the ritual that in due course of time transformed into *neo-vaiṣṇavism* characterised by its *sāttvik* manner. During the confluence of *Vajrayāna* tantrism with Brāhmanic religion and culture, their elements were somehow modified, reformed even extinguished. Hayagrīva Mādhava temple situated in the hillock *Maṇikūṭa* at *Hājo* represents such a symbol of religious unification in *Kāmarūpa*. A visit to the Hayagrīva Mādhava temple gave a more comprehensive picture of history, temple architecture, and the modes of worships in ancient times and its differences at present day.

### **Chapter- VIII Conclusion**

The genre of Vedic literature led us to the origin of the symbolic concept of theriomorphic manifestation of Lord Hayagrīva that symbolises energy, speed, power, intelligence and sacred knowledge. The concept of Hayagrīva dormant in the Vedic period gradually emerged as a luminous form in the *Mahābhārata*, and different sectarian *purāṇas*, where His role as the retriever of supreme knowledge becomes evident. Hayagrīva occupies an exalted position in the *vaiṣṇava purāṇas* and his worship is rewarded with intelligence; but in the *śākta* tradition, Hayagrīva occupies a role secondary to the supreme Devī. Hayagrīva, signifying the dynamic energy and seeded in Vedic texts, gradually flourished into a cult that brought an end to the contradictions with confluence of Brāhmanic and Buddhist ideologies. Hayagrīva prevails today as a living deity in the heart of his Hindu and Buddhist followers.

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Hence our effort accommodates a fresh and significant contribution to the domain of knowledge in the academic world. Various aspects of Hayagrīva such as, the benevolent form, supreme form, god form, the contradictory divine and demonic forms and the good with demonic instinct and the evil with good instinct could be realized through the study. Realizing the immense potential of energy both good and evil, one needs to understand the potential of knowledge for spiritual upliftment of mind and soul. The spiritual tradition of India, no doubt, has been enriched by the significant conception of Lord Hayagrīva reflected in the ancient Indian Sanskrit literature.

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## Declaration of Anti-plagiarism

I honestly declare that the thesis titled "Lord Hayagrīva in Sanskrit Literature" has been written by me under the supervision of Dr. Chandan Kumar Chakraborty, former Associate Professor, and the co-supervision of Dr. Debaraj Panigrahi, Assistant Professor, Department of Sanskrit, Tripura University. Excepting the quotations, wherever necessary in the thesis, I have borrowed nothing of the thesis from elsewhere.

I also affirm that the thesis is original and no part of this thesis has been cited from any other research work which may be considered as a part of plagiarism.

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(Anindita Adhikari)

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AitU	Aitareya Upaniṣad	VāyuP	Vāyu Purāṇa
AgniP	Agni Purāṇa	ViP	Viṣṇu Purāṇa
BAP	Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa	HayaU	Hayagrīva Upaniṣad
BhP	Bhāgavata Purāṇa	BORI	Bhandarkar Oriental
BrU	Bṛhadāryaṇaka Upaniṣad		Research Institute
ChāU	Chāndogya Upaniṣad		
DBh	Devī- Bhāgavatam		
GarP	Garuḍa Purāṇa		
HV	Harivaṃśa		
KathS	Kāthaka Saṁhitā		
KālP	Kālikā Purāṇa		
MārKp	Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa		
MatP	Matsya Purāṇa		
MBh	Mahābhārata		
MS	Manu-Smṛti		
MuU	Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad		
PadP	Padma Purāṇa		
PañB	Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa		
RV	Ṛg Veda		
ŚB	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa		
SkP	Skanda Purāṇa		
TaiĀ	Taittirīya Āraṇyaka		
TaiS	Taittirīya Saṁhitā		
VāmP	Vāmana Purāṇa		
VarP	Varāha Purāṇa		

# CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION



A study of the topic “Lord Hayagrīva in Sanskrit Literature” is a self explanatory title. Yet the concept of Hayagrīva<sup>1</sup> requires a bit introduction. ‘Haya’ meaning horse and ‘Grīva’ is the neck or head of horse. The two interrelated terms denotes some god whose origin can be clearly traced in the *Upaniṣad* as well as *Mahābhārata*. Hayagrīva is worshipped as the supreme Lord of knowledge and wisdom in the *Hayagrīvopaniṣad*, an *Upaniṣad* which is named after the Lord himself. The concept of Hayagrīva can, however, be traced back in the Vedic *Samhitās* though there is no clear mention of the name Hayagrīva. This type of mythological characteristics of a Hindu God is not rare in ancient Indian Sanskrit literature. There are various references in ancient Sanskrit texts in respect of the intermingling of

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<sup>1</sup> “Hayasya grīvā iva grīvā yasya= Hayagrīva”, as explained by Sri Mahādevānanda in his article meaning thereby ‘A Horse headed one’ or ‘Horse necked one’. Haya literally means Horse. Amarkoṣakāra gives etymologic utterance of the word ‘Haya’ as “Ghoṭake-pīti-turaga-turaṅgā’śva-turaṅgamāḥ/ vājīvāhārvahayasaindhavasaptayaḥ//” means ‘Haya’ refers as ‘Aśva’, ‘Turaga’, ‘Turaṅga’, Vājī etc. and the word Grīva means neck—“Śiro dhīyate’nayādhākarmraṇyadhikaraṇe ca” that which bears the head. The head or śira is vital part of body. As the neck or grīva contains the śira, it’s known as śirodhī. It is one of the parts of the human body with which gestures or *āṅgika* are performed, according to the *Nāṭyaśāstra* chapter 8. These gestures form a part of the *abhinaya*. Not only a part of human body it is also identical with animal body evident in a famous work of Kālidāsa’s *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* (1.6). In the transformation of Indian Temple Architecture, Grīva refers to the “neck” of a temple. It is the recess below the *Śikhara*. The Grīva of the temple or *prāsāda* is a very important recessed part (Indian Temple Architecture: Form and Transformation). According to the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* (chapter 14), Grīvā refers to that part of the human body from which Lord Buddha emitted numerous rays when he smiled after contemplating the entire universe. It may be said therefore, that the meaning of Grīva is identical with the neck and the meaning of the word Hayagrīva stands for horse necked or horse headed form.

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the form of God with animal figure. This Sanskritic tradition offers us an idea for longing to commune with nature and the animal world around us in a symbolic manner. The philosophical sense lying behind this Hayagrīva concept might be for helping the humanity to define itself not in respect of actuality but in regard to potentiality.

Every society or a state has its own cultural, social, political and economic tradition. In Indian tradition human animal relationships encountered in myths, narratives, fables, legends and stories of Sanskrit literature are very close to the community and its experiences with other living beings.

Making use of symbol is an ancient way to express something and in arousing consciousness. Symbol is the soul of literature that communicates an important message in a hidden meaning or suggestive sense. It can be traced in all areas of life within a given culture and can be seen in the myths, fairy tales, folklores, songs and poems of that culture. Symbols are handed down from generation to generation and preserved in oral and written tradition. Throughout the literary history, compilers of oral traditions have used animals as a means to express sense. The mythological contents which generate the foundation of literature are vitally important because they can reveal interesting expressions of the consciousness of the earlier people and provide a basis for judgement of humanity.<sup>2</sup>

Thousands of years ago when first symbols were recorded by the cavemen they served as means of expression. This art of using symbol in literature and culture are quite old. The animal motifs were used as symbols of religious beliefs. The religious traditional beliefs of the people from ancient times

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<sup>2</sup> Sigmund Freud: “Totem and Taboo.” *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, p.807.

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centre around the concept of animal motifs. The philosophy of “collective consciousness” explains the use of animal images and symbols congruent with human culture in several regions of the world.<sup>3</sup> Thus symbols and myths as observed today, serve as a window into human nature, his desires and fears in the past and present and that might offer hint at his future. The idea of anthropomorphism got subdued due to the exceeding influence of the religion of the Vedic Aryans that had a huge impact on the rise and development of theistic cults.

Mythology is connected with the sacred, religious part, furnishing the entire body of myths about gods, sages, and heroes to portray their nature, origin, acts and environments. A myth actually arises when the imagination of man in a primitive and unscientific age interprets a natural event as the deed of a personified being, resembling the human envoy. The original myth then moves into the phase of poetical embellishment.

Several instances of animal human form are found in the myths recorded in different parts of the world. There are motifs of half human half animal, with human torso animal hindquarter, and animal headed human, such as the half goat half man god Pan (Plate:I.a) as an energetic god and giver of fertility whose cult spread throughout the Greek world.<sup>4</sup> Anubis (Plate:I.b) is one of the old gods represented as a dog or jackal in a human form with a jackal head or as the animal itself in Egypt.<sup>5</sup> Sekhamet (Plate:I.c) is also a

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<sup>3</sup> C. G. Jung: “*Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious.*” *The Basic Writings of C.G. Jung*, pp.299-300.

<sup>4</sup> Cisco Wheeler: *Behold a White Horse*, p.208.

<sup>5</sup> Robart A Armour: *Gods and Myths of Ancient Egypt*, p.140.

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significant deity in the Egyptian religion having a form of lion head.<sup>6</sup> Horse headed Demeter is a goddess of mystic worship in the Greek religion.<sup>7</sup> Centaur (Plate:I.d) is another mythical figure of Greek which came from the idealized concept of riding with a human torso on horse hindquarters.<sup>8</sup> Pegasus<sup>9</sup> a divine winged equine deity depicted in white colour and symbolising wisdom, fame and creator of poetry is another western figure. In Indian tradition we can also find this type of absurd animal human combined form like Elephant headed Ganeśa (Plate:II.(A).a), Goat-headed Dakṣa (Plate:II.(A).b), Boar headed goddess Vārāhī (Plate:II.(A).c) etc. Interestingly here we also find several incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu with half-human half- animal or full animal form (Plate:II.(A).d,e,f).

These half animal half human forms are depicted as having some virtues of humans combined with the animal power. However, the eastern religious traditions describe more appropriately the relationship of human with non-human compared to the aboriginal or early western tradition, where human is custodian of all beings. The Sanskrit texts *Pañcatantra*, *Hitopadeśa*, *Kathāsaritsāgar* etc. are the most famous writings to focus on animal characters speaking in human voice.

Sanskrit literature is a vast literature of the world and in the study of history of Indian religions Vedic mythology occupies a very important position. Its oldest source occupies an earlier stage of beliefs based on the personification

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<sup>6</sup> Massimiliano Pinarello, Justin Yoo, Jason Lundock, Carl Walsh: *Current Research in Egyptology 2014 Proceedings of the fifteenth Annual Symposium*, p.100.

<sup>7</sup> Lewis Richard Farnell: *The Cult of the Greek States*, p.56.

<sup>8</sup> A.W. van den Hoek, D.H.A. Kolff, and M.S. Oort: *Ritual, State, and History in South Asia: Essays in Honour of J.C. Heesterman*, p.79.

<sup>9</sup> Steven Olderr: *Symbolism: A Comprehensive Dictionary*, p.113.

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and worship of natural phenomena. Vedic deities are classified into three fold divisions.<sup>10</sup> Though Vedic mythology is transparent enough to show the connection of both the deity and his name with a physical basis, in several instances the anthropomorphism is only incipient. Their acts and stories are narrated symbolically. Vedic seers adopt the symbol while anthropomorphic symbolism is not foremost and Vedic gods have human aspects too. The god forms with human superimposition in the Vedas are often described as holding weapon in their hands, dressed and wearing certain ornaments. Moreover in the verse like “*Sahasraśīrṣā puruṣa*”<sup>11</sup> and so on, the prevalence of symbol as human form is evident.

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<sup>10</sup> “A threefold divisions are implied when the gods are connected with heaven, earth and waters. Following the triple classification of *ṚV*, Yāska divides the different deities or forms of the same deity enumerated in the fifth chapter of the Naighaṇṭuka, into the three orders of *prthivīsthāna*, terrestrial (Nir. 7.14-9.43), *antarikṣasthāna*, *madhyamasthāna*, aerial or intermediate (10, 1-11.50), *dyusthāna*, celestial (12, 1-46).” A.A. Macdonell: *Vedic Mythology*, p.19.

<sup>11</sup> “Sahasraśīrṣā puruṣaḥ sahasrākṣaḥ sahasrapāt/  
Sa bhūmim viśvato vṛtvā'tyatiṣṭaddaśāgulam//  
Puruṣaṃ evedaṃ sarvaṃ yadbhūtaṃ yacca bhavya/  
Utāmṛtatvasyeśāno yadannenātirohati//  
Etāvānasya mahimāto jyāyāṃśca puruṣaḥ/  
Pādo'sya viśvā bhūtāni tripādasyāmṛtaṃ divi//  
Tripādūrdhva udait puruṣaḥ pādo'syehābhavat punaḥ/  
Tato visvaṇvyakrāmat sāsānānaśne abhi//  
Tasmādvirāḍajāyata virājo adhi puruṣaḥ/  
Sa jāto atyaricyata paścādbhūmimatho puraḥ//” *ṚV*, 10.90.1-5.

The *Puruṣa sūkta* explain the supreme spirit *Puruṣa* as thousand headed thousand eyed with thousand feet to encompass the universe and transcended it by ten *aṅgulas*. The parts of body here mentioned as metaphorically and by implication to individual being *Puruṣa*

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In the Indian tradition the duties of human being towards the other species were often expressed as explicit ethical assertion rather than as implied in the folks and legends. According to Indian tradition all beings, animate or inanimate, entire universe and everything in it is considered as an expression of the Supreme Being and human beings are the custodians.<sup>12</sup> It is to be understood that all beings are reflections of the divine Soul (Ātman) aiming at perfection and being one with the supreme Soul (Mokṣa) and the duty of a custodian would be to support this attainment.

This philosophical concept is well exemplified in the animal images and symbols very much common in the *R̥gveda* such as cow, bull, horse, eagle, and so on. Gods being associated with respective animals were originated in the Vedic period and subsequently evolved as ‘vāhana’, the animal vehicles of the gods in later Hinduism. The Vedas refer to horse as a ‘vāhana’ of the sun god. However, Vedic animals mostly remain as symbols, sometimes represented in absurd or mythic forms like the bull with four horns, three legs, two heads and seven hands.<sup>13</sup> Can there be four horns of a bull? This

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are meant. The entire world whatever has been and whatever will come to be is only Puruṣa. In this entire description ‘Virāt Puruṣa’ is purely symbolic.

<sup>12</sup> *Īsopaniṣad*, 1-3.

<sup>13</sup> The animal symbol plays a significant part in the grammatical philosophy also. Hence, Patañjali in his *Mahābhāṣya* refers a Vedic passage: “Catvāri sṛṅgā trayo asya pādā/ Dve śīrṣe sapta hastāso asya//”etc. According to Patañjali, the bull is *śabda-bahman*. It has four horns in the form of four distinct classes of words viz *nāma*, *ākhyāta*, *upasarga* and *nipāta*. It is with these four horns symbolical bull operates in this world. It means that *śabda* is reduced to meaningful sentence by using these four classes of words. The bull (*śabda*) has seven hands in the form of seven affixes and also have two heads implies that it has an eternal and transformatory form. The eternal meaning of *śabda* is *sphota*, which in its ‘kārya’ form refers to momentary “*vaikhari vāk*” that we hear after utterance. The

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can never happen in natural condition. Under these circumstances the odd shaped creatures that were imagined, were entirely mythical and totally absent in the real world. But it cannot be denied anyway that both human and animals are taken from the real world. Likewise, in the empirical world or real world, one cannot find a man with horse's head. It is totally absent in the real world. So, are these absurd creatures and these words fandango or clowning or meaningless? Is it merely funereal or does it have any mystical significance? The Vedic seers were experts in this fabrication of symbols. Subsequently use of the horse as a symbol can be seen. What does the horse symbolize? The horse in general is a symbol of the Sun god, as is evident from his several descriptions in the *Rgveda*<sup>14</sup> and the later Vedic literature.<sup>15</sup> Horse symbolises energy, light; swiftness etc. Symbol of light is *Saptāśva*. The word *aśva* signifying a horse is used to depict *prāṇa*, the nervous energy, the paramount health, the half-mental, half-material dynamism, that connects mind and matter. It has its root in the senses / ideas of impulsion, force, possession and ecstasy; united in the figure of the steed of life, to indicate the imperative tendencies of the *prāṇic* energy.<sup>16</sup> The harmonious combination of all these attributes was imposed on it. In this manner when the Vedic god is manifested with human superimposition, it appears to be the symbolic literary expression, and thus the idea of the Hayagrīva was formed.

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expression “*tridhā baddhaḥ*” in the third line refers to the three sense in which *śabda* is used. *Vyākaraṇa Mahābhāṣya*, Vol.I, p.40.

<sup>14</sup> *RV*, I .163.2; VII.77.3; I.50.1, 8. 9; V.45.9.

<sup>15</sup> *ŚB*, VI.3.1.29; VII.3.2.10; *AB*, VI.35; *TS*, VI. 6.1 1.6.

<sup>16</sup> Aurobindo: *The Symbolism in Rgveda*, p.32.

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The animal is a symbol of energy to overpower evil and also to subdue nature while the power of human intelligence symbolises the motivating heroic force in bringing about the impetus. So, Viṣṇu as the chief associate of Indra is sometimes compared with a dread beast and wide pacing bull as found in the *Ṛgveda*.<sup>17</sup>

Later, in the post-vedic age, when Lord Viṣṇu gradually emerged as a prominent and independent deity, it is observed that the combination of some characteristics as an animal and a human being resulting in the combination of energy and heroic force became natural development in many incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu. In this way, Viṣṇu is viewed as a lion-headed deity when he is as ‘Nṛsiṃhāvatāra’, boar headed deity the as ‘Varāhāvatāra’ and as a horse-headed deity with the name of ‘Hayagrīvāvatāra’. It is to be noted that the ‘Nṛsiṃhāvatāra’ is one of the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu but not ‘Hayagrīvāvatara’. Thus the present work titled, ‘LORD HAYAGRĪVA IN SANSKRIT LITERATURE’ aims at studying the origin and development of the concept of Hayagrīva cult as reflected in Sanskrit Literature so as to realize the greatness of Lord Viṣṇu.

Lord Hayagrīva is actually a symbol, a purely symbolic theriomorphic incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu that symbolises energy, speed, power, intelligence and knowledge. Going forward in search of Lord Hayagrīva in Sanskrit Literature, at first we approach the ancient Vedic texts to investigate the underlying concept of Hayagrīva. Then we move on to the mythological description of Hayagrīva in the great epic *Mahābhārata* and several sectarian Purāṇas, where we also come across some iconographical forms. A peep into

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<sup>17</sup> *RV, I.154.2.3.*

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the Tāntrik literature to have an idea about the mode of the god's worship is needed. The Vedic, Purāṇic and Tāntrik traditions of worship appear to be continuing in several temples which are dedicated to Lord Hayagrīva. This reflects the extent of glorification of Hayagrīva and its mark on humanism, universalism and transcendentalism resulting in the Hayagrīva cult. In the Classical Sanskrit literature, we find an epic titled, '*Hayagrīvavadham*'<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately *Hayagrīvavadham* has been lost, but some passages from this epic had been quoted in the Mammāṭa's *Kāvya prakāśa*, in the Viśvanātha Kavirāja's *Sāhityadarpaṇaḥ*, in the Bhojarāja's *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*, one in the Kṣemendra's *Suvṛttatilaka* and two more in Kalhaṇa's *Rājatarāṅginī*. Other stanzas are quoted in various anthologies. Some of the references are given bellow:

“Āsīd daityo hayagrīvaḥ/ Suhṛdveśmasu yasya tāḥ/  
Prathayanti balam bāhvoḥ/ Sitacchatrāsmiṭāḥ śriyaḥ//  
Yaṃ prekṣya cirarūḍhāpi/ Nivāsaprītirujjhitāḥ/  
Madenairāvaṇamukhe/ Mānena hṛdaye hareḥ//  
Vinirgataṃ mānadamātmandirāt/ Bhavatyupaśrutya yaddṛcchayāpi yaṃ/  
Sasambhramendradrutapāitārgalā/ Nimīlitākṣīva bhiyā'marāvātī//” *Kāvya prakāśa*, 1.  
“Sprṣṭāntā nandane śacyāḥ/ Keśasambhogalālītā/  
Sāvajñaṃ pārijāṭasya/ Mañjaryo yasya sainikaiḥ//” *Sāhityadarpaṇaḥ*, 10.  
“Dānavādhipate bhūyo/ bhujo'yaṃ kinna nīyate/  
Sahāyatāṃ kṛtāntasya/ Kṣayābhiprāyasiddhiṣu//  
Mahāsurasamāje'smin/ Na caiko'pyasti so'suraḥ/  
Yasya nāśaniniṣpeṣaṇīrājītamuraḥsthalam//” *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*, 2.472.  
“Vipadi dhairyamathābhyudaye kṣamā/ Sadasi vākpaṭutā yudhi vikramaḥ/  
Yaśasi cābhiratirvyasanam śrute/ Prakritisiddhamidaṃ hi mahātmanām//” *Subhā*, 267.  
“Tākto vindhyagiriḥ pitā bhagavatī mātēva revā nadī/  
Te te snehanibandhabandhuradhiyastulyodayā dantinaḥ//  
Tvallobhānnanu hastini swayamidaṃ vandhāya dattaṃ vapus/  
Tvam dūre dhriyase luṅṭhanti ca śiraḥpīṭhe kathoraṅkuśāḥ//” *Saduktikarṇāmṛta*, 1853.

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composed by the poet Bhartṛmeṇṭha<sup>19</sup> who is also known by the name Meṇṭha or Hastipaka. Mahādeva is the hero and the demon Hayagrīva is the villain in this epic.

As our subject of research is **Lord Hayagrīva in Sanskrit literature** it behoves us to give an account of the texts and references on the subject which we have gone through in preparing the thesis. The primary sources consist of the original texts of the Vedic literature – *Samhitās*, prominent *Brāhmaṇas* and the related *Upaniṣad*. The original text of the great Indian epic, the *Mahābhārata*, prominent purāṇa texts like *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, *Bhāgavatpurāṇa*, *Agnipurāṇa*, *Devībhāgavata* etc were gone through. To have an idea about the worship of Lord Hayagrīva Tāntrik literature named *Yoginī Tantra* originated in Assam, was considered.

Several ancillary sources such as **“Hayagrīva: Horse-Headed Deity in Indian Culture”**, a research work by Sridhara Babu is an useful sourcework of references to Hayagrīva in Indian literature and culture, has helped in my study. The first analytical discussion on Hayagrīva in English language is **“Hayagrīva: The Mantrayanic Aspect of Horse Cult in China and Japan”** written by R.H.van Gulik. It is primarily a textual survey of the Buddhist references to Hayagrīva in Tibet, China, and Japan in the light of the status of Horse-cult, apart from a very brief preliminary sketch of the Hayagrīva deity in India. He says that before the introduction of *Mantrayāna*

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<sup>19</sup> His importance as a poet as equal to Kālidāsa, Bhāravi, Subandhu or Bāṇa is shown in his praises by Maṅka, Śivasvāmin, Rājaśekhara and others. According to Kalhaṇa, Meṇṭha was a Kāśmirī, who worked at the court of king Mātṛgupta of Kāśmīra.

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Buddhism in Tibet and Japan, the horse-cult dominantly existed there and the Hayagrīva became prominent because of the local traditions of appropriation and unity of Hayagrīva with local deities. Another work titled, **“Hayagrīva: The Many History of an Indian Deity”** written by Kamala E. Nayar, has also been gone through. This study traces the complex development of a relatively “minor pan-Indian deity” Hayagrīva, revered as a full form of the supreme Lord Viṣṇu in the *Vaiṣṇava* tradition of South India during fourteenth century C.E. From the perspectives of mythology, iconography and ritual, the analysis examines the deity corresponding to the three-fold division of Hindu texts like a) pan-Indian ‘mainstream’ i.e Vedas, Epics and Purāṇas. b) pan-Indian sectarian Āgamas and c) regional sectarian hymns of the Alṅvārs and *Vaiṣṇava* Ācāryas.

However, in the tradition of China the indigenous horse cult reveals that the status of Hayagrīva has receded to a little. In the article **“The Demon and Deity: Conflict Syndrome in the Hayagrīva Legend”** written by Suvira Jaiswal, the conflict about the Hayagrīva myth in several texts is analysed and arguments presented for the necessity of its anthromorpological and historical importance. The author of the article is of the belief that one cannot simply assume direct textual linking of the development of Hayagrīva. Another article **“Hayagrīva or the Making of an Avatāra”**, written by Adalbert J. Gail, deals with the origin of the Hayagrīvāvatāra on the basis of the idea of the Submarine fire and also adds important hydrological observation and declares the *avatāra* Viṣṇu-Hayagrīva as the creator of the Vedas. In India the worship of Hayagrīva is mostly observed in Karnataka. Other works related to the Hayagrīva worship at Hājo Mādhava Temple, Assam, one of the living traditions of this deity, include

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**“Hayagrīva worship in Assam”** by J.C. Ghosh and **“Worship of Hayagrīva”** by Maheswara Neog. Observing the *Hayagrīva* worship in Maṇikūṭa Hill in *Hājo*, Assam, Suvira Jaiswal concludes that the figure found till today originated in the beliefs and traditions of the indigenous tribes of Assam and was then incorporated into the *Mantrayāna* Buddhism.

After a thorough consideration of the above mentioned books and articles it could be surmised that Sridhara Babu gave an overall view of Hayagrīva nevertheless there is a lack of conceptualization of the subject and critical analysis, R.H.van Gulik dealt with Hayagrīva in Buddhism mentioning a brief idea in the Indian aspect and Kamala E Nayer presented a historical background of the Hayagrīva in the temples of South India. The present study conceptually differs from the above mentioned references as it has attempted a thorough study of the original Sanskrit texts, for the first time to unveil the mystery lying with Hayagrīva as reflected in the Sanskrit literature. Moreover, necessity was felt to throw light on the complete picture of the origin and development of the Hayagrīva cult in the Indian context.

A visit to a temple dedicated to the Hayagrīva in Assam reveals that there is truly a lacking of comprehensive and critical approach in the abovementioned studies. So, a holistic study of the concept of the Hayagrīva *avatāra* and cult is necessary to fill in the gap of the query focussing on the following points.

- The origin of this absurd form of Viṣṇu, the symbolic implication behind the weird expression and concept of the Hayagrīva, its expansion
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into later Vedic literature that leads to the place of Hayagrīva in the *Hayagrīvopaniṣad*.

- The part played by the Hayagrīva in the great Epic *Mahābhārata*. Viṣṇu as a retriever of the Vedas and the ultimate redeemer.
- A comparative study of the concept of Hayagrīva in the *Mahābhārata* and in the *Hayagrīvopaniṣad*.
- Treatment of Hayagrīva in different sectarian *purāṇas* and a comparative study amongst *Vaiṣṇava*, *Śākta* and *Śaiva purāṇa* to present a comprehensive picture.
- Significance of the most elaborate narrative of the *Devībhāgavata* where Devī is explicit as the cause behind every cosmic activity.
- The iconography and worship of Hayagrīva and the emergence of the Hayagrīva cult as a means to unify different religious sects.

Our method in the present dissertation is both critical and comparative. To complete the present dissertation, consultation has been made with the relevant original texts of the Vedic literature *Samhitās*, major Brāhmaṇical texts and *Hayagrīvopaniṣad* to find out the origin of the Hayagrīva concept. Lord Hayagrīva is a purely symbolic manifestation of Viṣṇu having human form with horse's head in the Vedic mythology. Therefore the concept has to be investigated in the Vedic literature to know how the original human head was cut down and transplanted with the horse's head.

The relevant portions of the original text of the great epic, *Mahābhārata* with the available commentaries and notes, have been gone through to reveal the mythical nature of Lord Hayagrīva therein. We have also included detailed consideration of the texts of the major *purāṇas* like—*Viṣṇupurāṇa*,

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*Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, *Agnipurāṇa*, *Devībhāgabata*, *Skandapurāṇa* etc. wherein a clear picture of the myths related to Lord Hayagrīva is available. A comparative study of the episodes of Lord Hayagrīva available in different *purāṇas* and the great epic has also been made.

Moreover, to give our dissertation a comprehensive form we also had to peep into the Tāntrik literature to bring out the method of worshipping the Lord Hayagrīva. There are many temples having the images of Lord Hayagrīva scattered all over India. The Hayagrīva Mādhava Temple in *Hājo*, Assam was visited by us to have a practical idea about the worship and other related matters. We have also tried to be acquainted with the works of great scholars in this subject and weigh their views.

We sincerely feel that a critical study of the origin and development of the concept of **Lord Hayagrīva in Sanskrit Literature** is a long felt desideratum and our present research work will surely fulfil this gap. Our realistic and practical assessment will surely make the study an interesting and useful in the academic field and also add to the requirement of religious and cultural advancement.

The thesis titled '**LORD HAYAGRĪVA IN SANSKRIT LITERATURE**' comprises of seven chapters as mentioned below.

**Chapter One:** Introduction

**Chapter Two:** Hayagrīva in the *Hayagrīvopaniṣad*. Origin and development of Hayagrīva in the Vedic literature through *Samhitās*, major *Brāhmaṇs*, *Āraṇyakas* and *Hayagrīvopaniṣad*.

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**Chapter Three:** Hayagrīva in the *Mahābhārata*.

**Chapter Four:** This chapter deals with Lord Hayagrīva in different *purāṇas* namely *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, *Agnipurāṇa*, *Bhagavatpurāṇa* etc. Differences and similarities in the approaches of the *purāṇas* are also discussed. The role played by Hayagrīva in the religious aspect is also noted.

**Chapter Five:** Hayagrīva in the *Devībhāgavata*.

**Chapter Six:** Hayagrīva in the *Yoginī Tantra*. Hayagrīva Mādhava Temple in *Hājo*, Assam. The legend of Hayagrīva Mādhava – His worship.

**Chapter Seven:** Conclusion.

However, each chapter has been divided into sections and sub-sections. It is hoped that the result of our investigation will surely add significant contribution to the concerned field of studies and will incite for further investigation on the incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu.

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**CHAPTER II:  
HAYAGRĪVA IN THE  
HAYAGRĪVOPANIṢAD**





Vedic literature is the oldest and most important source of Indian religion and philosophy. This literature consists of the *Samhitās*, *Brāhmaṇas*, *Āraṇyakas* and *Upaniṣads*. The *Samhitās* are mantras and benedictions, the *Brāhmaṇas* are commentaries of the mantras employed in the rituals, ceremonies and sacrifices, the *Āraṇyakas* are texts on rituals, ceremonies and symbolic-sacrifices, and the *Upaniṣads* are the texts, discussing meditation, philosophy and spiritual knowledge.<sup>1</sup> A dive into the Vedic literature is felt necessary to trace the antecedents of Hayagrīva in the *Hayagrīvopaniṣad*.

The vast expanse of Lord Viṣṇu is seen in Sanskrit literature. Viṣṇu occupies a subordinate position in the *R̥gveda* associated with Indra. Later he rose to a position of capital importance in the mythology of the *Brāhmaṇas*. Viṣṇu has a very broad sense in the *Vedas* and *Upaniṣads*, in the history and mythology, in the chanting and poetry. The name Viṣṇu, can be distinctively explained as ‘the active one’. In the *Nirukta*, Yāṣka defines Viṣṇu as “*Viṣṇur viṣvater vā vyaśnoter vā*” as the one who embarks everywhere, he mentions, “*atha yad viṣito bhavati tad viṣnurbhavati*” i.e., the one free from restraints and servitude is Viṣṇu.<sup>2</sup> Medhātithi suggests that the word Viṣṇu has etymological roots in *viś-* to pervade, thereby implying that Viṣṇu is ‘one who pervades everything and is inside everything’.<sup>3</sup> All-pervasiveness and three strides or ‘*Trivikrama*’ are the main traits of Lord Viṣṇu’s character as envisaged by the *Samhitās* and *Brāhmaṇas*.

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<sup>1</sup> George M. Williams: *Handbook of Hindu Mythology*, p. 285.

<sup>2</sup> Adluri, Vishwa; Joydeep Bagchee: *From Poetic Immortality to Salvation: Ruru and Orpheus in Indic and Greek Myth, History of Religions*, pp. 245–246.

<sup>3</sup> Klaus K. Klostermaier: *Hinduism; A Short History*. pp. 83–84.

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Several hymns of the *Ṛgveda* repeat the mighty deed of Viṣṇu called the *Trivikrama*<sup>4</sup>, which is one of the lasting mythologies since the Vedic times.<sup>5</sup> In the *Ṛgveda* 1.22.16, it is said “Ato devā avantuno yato viṣṇurvicakrame/ Pṛthivyā saptadhāmabhiḥ//” This mantra is also seen in the *Sāmaveda*<sup>6</sup>, *Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā*<sup>7</sup> and *Atharvaveda*<sup>8</sup> with slight variation. Interpreting the mantras *niruktakāra* says,

“Yadidaṃ kiñca tadvikramate viṣṇuḥ/ tridhā nidadhe padaṃ/ Tredhā bhāvaya ‘pṛthivyām antarīkṣe divi’ iti Śākapuniḥ ‘samārohaṇe viṣṇupade gayāśirasi’ iti Aurnavābhaḥ/ Samūḍhamasya pāṃśure/ Pyāyane’ntarīkṣe padaṃ na dṛśyate/ Apāva upamārthaḥ syāt/ Samūḍhamasya pāṃśula iva padaṃ na dṛśyate//”<sup>9</sup>

Viṣṇu’s epithets as *Urugāya* or ‘wide going’ and *Urukrama* or ‘wide-striding’, indicate the same. With the three steps Viṣṇu traverses the earth or the terrestrial spaces. Two of His steps are perceptible to men, but the third or highest pace is beyond the understanding of mortal ken.<sup>10</sup> The same notion appears to be mystically expressed when he is said to bear his third

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<sup>4</sup> “Viṣṇornu kaṃ vīryāṇi pra vocaṃ yaḥ pāṛthivāni vimame rajāṃsi/

Yo askabhāyaduttarat sadhasthaṃ vicakramāṇastredhorugāyaḥ//

Yasyooruṣu triṣu vikramaṇesvadhikṣiyanti bhuvanāni visvā //”

“Ya idaṃ dīrghaṃ prayataṃ sadhasthameko vimame tribhiritpadebhiḥ//”

“Yasya trī pūrṇā madhunā padāny akṣīramānā svadhayā madanti//

Yya u tridhātu pṛthvīrṇuta dyāmeke dādadhāra bhuvanāni visvā //” *ṚV*, 1.154. 2b, 3b, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Klaus K. Klostermaier : *Op. cit.* pp.84–85.

<sup>6</sup> “Idaṃ viṣṇurvicakrame tredhā ni dadhe padaṃ samūḍhamasya pāṃśure” *Sāma*, 2.10.18.

<sup>7</sup> “Triṇī padā vicakrame viṣṇurgopā adābhaḥ/ Ato dharmāṇi Dhārayan//” *VāS*, 34.43.

<sup>8</sup> *AV*, 7.26.5.

<sup>9</sup> *Nir*, 12.19.

<sup>10</sup> *ṚV*, 1.155.5; 7.99.2,

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name in the bright domain of heaven.<sup>11</sup> Yāṣka's predecessor Aurnavābha denotes the three steps to signify the rising, crowning and setting sun.<sup>12</sup> The other view, which coerces throughout the *Brāhmaṇas* and the post Vedic literature, supported by Yāṣka's predecessor Śākapuni<sup>13</sup> also appreciated by Macdonell, interprets the three steps to be the course of the solar deity through the three divisions of the universe.<sup>14</sup> Even if Viṣṇu is no longer clearly associated with a natural phenomenon, evidence appears to justify that he was essentially envisaged as the sun, not in his general character, but as the embodied, swiftly moving luminary, with infinite strides to transcend the entire universe. The justification could be derived from the root *viś*, which is often used reasonably in the *Ṛgveda*.<sup>15</sup>

In the *Ṛgveda*, there are references to Viṣṇu where he represents the Sūrya, the soma, as the slayer of the demon Vṛtra and as god who takes three strides to measure the universe. In the *Atharvaveda* he radiates incandescence<sup>16</sup> and in the *Brāhmaṇas* his head gets severed to become the sun. In the *Brāhmaṇas* he is equated with Prajāpati, the supreme deity, the god of creation with his cosmogonic role of taking strides and pervading the three worlds.

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<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, 1.155.3

<sup>12</sup> *Nir*, 12.19.

<sup>13</sup> “Viṣṇurādityaḥ/ Kathammiti yata āha ‘tredhā nidadhe padaṃ’ nidadhe padaṃ nidānaṃ padaiḥ kva tattāvat pṛthivyāmantarīkṣe divīti Śākapuniḥ//”

<sup>14</sup> Macdonell, A. A: *Vedic Mythology*.p.38.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p.39.

<sup>16</sup> “Viṣṇuryunaktu vahudhā tapāṅgasyasmin yajñe suyujah svāhā//” AV.5.26.7.

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He is also identified with Āditya or Agni thus retaining his solar origin. Viṣṇu is closely associated with Indra and through this association he becomes a drinker of soma.<sup>17</sup> He appears as a protector of the embryo. Moreover references are made to the fact that in battle he assumed a strange form.<sup>18</sup> In the *Yajurveda Samhitā* Viṣṇu is more prominent compared to the *Ṛgveda* and in the *Brāhmaṇas* his cosmic nature is more emphasised.

The Vedic seers observed the nature as a part of divinity and a greater truth. Macdonell says, “Material objects are occasionally mentioned in the later Vedic literature as symbol representing deities.”<sup>19</sup> Even Vedic animals are represented as symbol in absurd or mythic forms.

The process of human’s expansion beyond animal existence has been accomplished partly by his ability to understand symbols. ‘Symbol’ is a general term and in the modern times it comprises all that is in a sign, mark or token. In philosophy, psychology, sociology and art it is regarded as that which means something else. The term symbol is derived from the Greek word ‘*smbolon*’. It appears to mean to bring together ideas and objects, one expressing the other; and this meaning is the reasonable antecedent of the modern meaning of symbolism.<sup>20</sup>

Symbols may be conveniently grouped into five classes, where symbolism represents:<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Keith, A.B: *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upaniṣads*, Part I. p.109.

<sup>18</sup> *RV*.7.100.6.

<sup>19</sup> Macdonell. A.A: *Op. cit.* p.155.

<sup>20</sup> Whittickp, Arnald: *Symbols Signs and their meaning and uses in Design*.p.3.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*,p.5.

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- a group of objects by approximate imitation and of a part of an object used to represent the entire
- an object associated with thought, action, occupation or custom
- an object, which by its nature, analogous character and function represents or suggests an idea
- an idea by association of two or more ideas/objects
- an idea or concrete object which expresses itself by motifs incorporated in the design(s)

In the world literature beasts are used by authors as symbols. In India there are many tales and fables which have been found in the *Pañcatantra* and such other works. A critical and careful study of the Sanskrit literature shows that animals in general and beast in particular have played the role of symbols related to human behaviour and such other matters. The animal symbols possess great suggestive value. In fact the beast symbol was started in the Veda itself.

The animal is a symbol of energy, needed to overcome evil and also to subdue nature while the power of human intelligence symbolises the motivating heroic force in bringing about the motivation. So, Viṣṇu as the chief associate of Indra is sometimes compared with a dread beast and wide pacing bull as found in the *Rgveda*.<sup>22</sup>

Animal enters to a considerable extent into the mythological creations of the Veda, from a primordial age when the line, dividing men and animal, was not definitely drawn and gods might be imagined as having animal forms as

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<sup>22</sup> RV.1.154.2.3.

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there are some traces of such animal forms still. The higher Vedic gods being anthropomorphic in character and the relationship of the Vedic gods with the animals draw special treatment. According to ethnology, the predominant animal traits amongst Vedic gods had a remote antiquity where the god is frequently an animal or becomes an animal, or can oscillate between both human and animal nature.

The Vedic Indians meet the real animal as the messenger or the representative of gods. Some scholar states,

“However the great gods standing in the foreground more or less similar to human beings are surrounded by a kind of divine animal world: numerous primitive gods , particularly, creatures hostile to the gods, demons causing diseases etc, have animal form.”<sup>23</sup>

In the Veda the place of animal is of comparatively little importance, so far as the direct worship of animals is concerned. There is distinctiveness in theriomorphism of gods, whether individuals and or species, animal fetishes or non animal gods, and the existence of these seem to be divine. These animal forms depict aquatic, avian, domestic, economically important and magnificent creatures of wild, especially horse an animal symbolizing strength and speed is accredited divine respect by Vedic poets.

Concerning antecedents to the horse headed figures, animals enjoy a significant position in the Vedas. Myth tradition is also populated by theriomorphic or anthropomorphic beings, figures that are partly human and partly animal. When the line dividing men from animals was not absolutely

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<sup>23</sup> Oldenberg. H: *The Religion of the Vedas*, p.37.

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drawn, gods could be imagined as having animal forms. This anthropomorphic nature is evident in the higher Vedic gods themselves. Features of the god's identity are symbolically represented through references to the characteristics of distinctive animals.

Horse has been imagined as the symbol of energy, light, swiftness etc. throughout the Vedas visualised as the wings of an eagle, limbs of a deer, golden horns, bronze feet and he moves faster than thought.

“Śyenasya pakṣā hariṇasya vāhu upastutaṁ mahi jātāṁ te arvan//”

“Hiraṇyaśṛṅgo'yo asya pādā manojavā avara indra āsīt/

Devā idasya haviradyamāṣṇyo arvantaṁ prathamō adhyatiṣṭhat//”<sup>24</sup>

The *Upaniṣads* linked the senses to horse that must be reined or else will become vicious and wild (*KU*, 3.4-6); and a mendicant said to the Buddha “the senses of others are restless like horses, but yours have been tamed. Other beings are passionate, but your passions have ceased.”<sup>25</sup> The horse is especially associated with the ocean and fire. In the *R̥gveda*, fiery horses draw the chariot of the sun, the flames of agni.<sup>26</sup> Agni appears as a horse in

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<sup>24</sup> *RV*, 1.163.1b.

“Hiraṇyaśṛṅgo'yo asya pādā manojavā avara indra āsīt/

Devā idasya haviradyamāṣṇyo arvantaṁ prathamō adhyatiṣṭhat//”*ibid.*, 1.163.9.

<sup>25</sup> O'Flaherty, Wendy Doniger : *Women, Androgynes, and Other Mythical Beasts*. p .239.

<sup>26</sup> “Yāti devaḥ pravatā yātyudvatā yāti śrubhrābhyāṁ yajato haribhyāṁ/

Ā devo yāti savitā parāvato'pa viśvā duritā vādhamānaḥ//”*RV*, 1.35.3.

“Kṛṣṇaṁ niyānaṁ harayaḥ suparṇā apo vasānā vidamutpatanti/

Ta āvavṛtrantsadanāḍṛtasyādidaghūtena pṛthivī vyudyate//”*ibid.*, 1.164.47.

“Stavā nu ta indra pūrvyā mahānyuta stavāma nūtanā kṛtāni/

Stavā vajraṁ vāhvorośantaṁ stavā harī sūryasya ketū//”*ibid.*, 2.11.6.

“Pro tye agnaya'gniṣu viśvaṁ puṣānti vāryaṁ/

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the *ṚV* to deceive the demons.<sup>27</sup> While agni was hiding from the gods, Prajāpati takes the form of a white horse to find him and enters the ocean in this form. Agni burns the horse's mouth.<sup>28</sup> This comprises the essential motifs of the *Vaḍavāvaktra* fire. Apart from the connection between horse and fire, the connection with ocean is also established. In the *Brāhmaṇas* the horse is born from the womb of ocean<sup>29</sup> and is sacred to Varuṇa, the god of water.<sup>30</sup> In this context Stella Kramrisch states that “the ancient Aryans sacrificed a horse to Varuṇa, the god of the fertilizing waters. In the hymnic liquor they knew the horse as Varuṇa.”<sup>31</sup>

The relationship of the Vedic gods to the animals observed a few cases where the animal represents god in the ritual, an instance of animal fetishism or its less distinct remnant coming into practice.<sup>32</sup> Horse forms an important component in certain soma sacrifice, where the recitation of the hymns, a characteristic for this form, takes place during sunset. The horse head is connected with the myth of the seeking of soma and agni. Oldenberg states that the animal fetishism or something analogous to it is not only limited to domestic animals but later forms a higher cult.<sup>33</sup> The view that associates the Vedic age with the cultic use of animals, did not invest the full majesty of

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Te hinvire ta invire ta iyaṇyantyānuṣāgiyaṃ stotṛbhya ā bhara//”*ibid.*, 5.6.6.

“Adhukṣat pipyuṣṭiṣmūrjaṃ saptapadīmayiḥ/

Sūryasya saptaraśmibhiḥ//”*ibid.*, 8.72.16,

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, 1.58.2, 149.3, 60.5; 2.4.4; 5.1; 3.2.7, 27.3, 27.14.

<sup>28</sup> *ŚB*, 7.3.2.14.

<sup>29</sup> *TaiS*, 7.5.25.2; *ŚB*, 5.1.4.5.

<sup>30</sup> *ŚB*, 5.3.1.5; 6.2.1.5.

<sup>31</sup> *ṚV*, 1.163.1.

<sup>32</sup> Oldenberg, H. *Op. cit.* p.39

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, *Op. cit.* p. 41.

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the god in a bull or a horse.<sup>34</sup> Between a god and an animal, there exists a certain association of the substance; an association that constantly engage our interest while considering the cult of magic.

The symbolic use of horse in several places of the Vedic literature may be discussed in this context.

### **1.Saṃhitā Part:**

#### **1.1.Divine steed in the *R̥gveda*:**

##### **1.1.1.Dadhikrā:**

The Vedic *Saṃhitās* and the *Brāhmaṇas* are mentioning the divine steed which is symbolically connected with Lord Viṣṇu, the Sun god. In the passages of the *R̥gveda*, horse is related with the sun and the most striking example of this is the steed Dadhikrā is celebrated in the later hymns of the *R̥gveda*.<sup>35</sup> Dadhikrā is mentioned in the *R̥gveda* twelve times and often as Dadhikrāvan during least ten times. Characteristically Dadhikrā as a steed, appearing in the *Naighaṇṭuka*,<sup>36</sup> is a synonym of horse. He is swift<sup>37</sup>, who speeds like the wind.<sup>38</sup> In one passage he is describe as the swan or *haṃsa*

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<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, ‘loc. cit.’p. 41.

<sup>35</sup> *RV*,4.38-40; 7,44.

<sup>36</sup> *Nir*,1,14.

<sup>37</sup> “Uta vājinam puruniṣṣidvānam dadhikrāmu dadathurviśvakṛṣṭim/  
R̥jipyam śyenam pruyitaspumāśum cakṛṛtyamaryo nṛpatiṃ na śuraṃ//”*RV*,4.38.2.

“Uta smāsyā panayanti janāḥ jūtiṃ kṛṣṭipro abhibhūtimāśoḥ/  
Utenamāhu samithe viyantaḥ parā dadhikrā asarat sahasraiḥ//”*RV*,4.38. 9.

“Āśum dadhikrām tamu nuṣṭavām divaṣṛthivyā utacarkirām/  
Ucchantīrmāmuṣasaḥ sūdayantvati viśvāni duritani paṛṣan//”*RV*,4.39.1.

<sup>38</sup> “Yaṃ sīmanu pravateva dravantam viśvaḥ pūrumadati harṣamānaḥ/

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dwelling in the light.<sup>39</sup> This description of the symbolic nature of Dadhikrā may suggest the great swiftness of the steed. The steed Dadhikrā is praised when agni is kindled at the dawning of *uṣas*.<sup>40</sup> Thus he is called Dadhikrā represented in the form of a steed, the circling ball of the sun which supports that Dadhikrā is closely connected with *uṣas*.<sup>41</sup> Dadhikrā is often related with agni including his solar and lightening forms which indicate that divine steed is connected with the sun. He is conceived as winged and his wing is like a bird and of a speeding eagle.<sup>42</sup>

### 1.1.2. Tārksya:

Tārksya is nearly related to Dadhikrā mentioned twice in the *Ṛgveda*.<sup>43</sup> In the identical word applied to Dadhikrā<sup>44</sup>, he is primarily conceived as a steed

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Paḍbhirgrdhyantaṃ medhayuṃ na śūraṃ rathaturāṃ vātamiva dhrajanāṃ//”*RV*,4.38.3.

<sup>39</sup> “Hamsaḥ śuchiyaḍsurantariḥśasaddhvotā vediśadatithirduroṇasat/

Nṛṣadvarasadr̥tasadvyomasadavjā gojā ṛtajā adriajā ṛtam//”*RV*,4.40.5.

<sup>40</sup> “Yo aśvasya dadhikrāvṇo akārītsamiddhe agnā uṣaso vyūṣṭau/

Anāgasam tamaditiḥ kṛṇotu sa mitreṇa varuṇenā sajoṣā//”*RV*,4.39.3.

<sup>41</sup> Macdonell. A.A: *Op. cit.* p.149.

<sup>42</sup> “Satā bhariṣo gaviṣo duanysacchraasyādiṣa uṣasasturanyasyat/

Satyodravo dravarah ptangaro dadhikrāveṣamūrjaṃ svarjanat//

Utas māsyā dravatsturanyataḥ purnam na veranu vātipragardhinaḥ/

Śyenasyeva dhrajato angkasaṃ pari dadhikrāvaṇaḥ sahorjā taritrataḥ//”*RV*,4.40.2-3.

<sup>43</sup> “Svasti na indro vṛddhaśravāḥ svasti naḥ pūṣā visvavedā/

Svasti nastarkṣyo ariṣṭnemiḥ svasti no vṛhaspatirdadhātu//”*ibid.*,1.89.6.

“Tāmū ṣu vājinaṃ devajūtaṃ sahāvānaṃ tarutāraṃ rathānām/

Ariṣṭanemiḥ pṛtanājamāsum svastaye tārksyamihā huvema//”*ibid.*,10.178.1.

<sup>44</sup> “Ā dadhikrāḥ śavasā pañca kṛṣṭiḥ sūrya iva jyotiṣāpastatān/

Sahasrasaḥ śatasā vājyrvapṛṇktumadhvā samimā vacāṃsi//”*ibid.*,4.38.10.

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shown by his epithet *ariṣṭhanemi*,<sup>45</sup> ‘whose fellies are intact’, which appears as an independent name beside Tārksya and Garuḍa in *Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā*.<sup>46</sup> In the *Naighaṇṭuka kāṇḍa* of *Nirukta* the word Tārksya is used as a synonym of horse.<sup>47</sup> However, in another place Tārksya refers to a bird.<sup>48</sup> In the epic and later literature it is identical to Viṣṇu’s vehicle, the swift bird Garuḍa. This may be the source of its origin and later association with Viṣṇu. Macdonell states that Tārksya originally represented the sun in the form of a divine steed.<sup>49</sup> These passages may be the source of origin and inspiration of the later association between Viṣṇu and the divine bird Garutmān. The mythical bird Garutmān finds its origin in the idea of Tārksya. The sun also sometimes is conceived as a bird by the name of Garutmat at least twice in the *Ṛgveda*.<sup>50</sup> The *Ṛgveda* affirms that: “God is one. The sages call him by many names like Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Divya, Garutmat, the celestial universal sunbird. They speak of Agni, Yama, Mātariśvan.”<sup>51</sup>

### 1.1.3.Paidva:

One more divine steed of the *Ṛgveda* is Paidva which was brought to Pedu<sup>52</sup> by the Aśvins and so it is called Paidva.<sup>53</sup> Paidva is described as white in

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<sup>45</sup> “Svasti na indro vṛddhśravāḥ svasti naḥ pūṣā viśvadevā/

Svasti nstārksyo ariṣṭhanemiḥ svasti no bṛhaspatirdadhātu//”*ibid.*, 1.89.6.

<sup>46</sup> VS, 15.18.

<sup>47</sup> *Nir*, 1.14.

<sup>48</sup> Macdonell. A.A: ‘loc. cit.’ p.149.

<sup>49</sup> Macdonell. A.A: *ibid.*, p.149.

<sup>50</sup> Macdonell. A.A: *ibid.*, p.152.

<sup>51</sup> “Indraṃ mitraṃ varuṇamagniṇatvāmāhūratho divāḥ sa suparṇo garutmān/

Ekam sadviprā vahudhā vadantyaagniṃ yamaṃ mātariśvānamāhuḥ//”*RV*, 1.164.46.

<sup>52</sup> “Yuvaṃ cyavānaṃ jarasohamumuktaṃ ni pedava Ūhathurāśumaśvaṃ/

Niraṃhasastamasah sprtamatriṃ ni jāhuṣaṃ śithire dhātamantaḥ//”*ibid.*, 7.71.5.

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colour, conqueror, invincible in battle and seeking heaven.<sup>54</sup> This evidence again appears to favour the interpretation of the steed Pedu as symbolising the sun.

The word Etāśa occurs sometimes as adjective, meaning swift, more frequently signifying steed in the *Rgveda*<sup>55</sup> and also designating the horses of the sun.<sup>56</sup> In one passage it is indicated that the dawn is said to lead a white steed<sup>57</sup> and in another passage the sacrificial steed appears to be created by the gods out of the sun<sup>58</sup>.

According to Macdonell's interpretation, all these references are of the divine steed which is associated with the sun. Other references of the *Rgveda* recommend the horse as a symbol of the sun. Apart from the indirect connection of horses with Viṣṇu as a solar deity, these references do not

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<sup>53</sup> "Yadaśvinā dadathuḥ śvetamaśvamaghāśvāya śaśvadiṃsvasti/  
Tadvām dātram mahi kīrtanyam bhūtpaidvo vājī sadamidvavo ayaḥ/" *ibid.*, 1.116. 6.

"Indra na yo mahā karmāṇi cakirhantā vṛtrāṇāmasi soma pūrbhit/  
Paidvo na hi tvamahināmnām hantā viśvasyāsi soma dasyoḥ/" *ibid.*, 9.88. 4.

<sup>54</sup> "Yuvam pedave puruvāramaśvinā sprdhām śvetam tarutāram duvasyatha/  
Śairyarabhidyum pṛtanāsu duṣṭaram carkṛtyamindramiva carṣaṇīsaḥam/" *ibid.*, 1.119.10.

<sup>55</sup> A.A. Macdonell: 'loc. cit.' p.149.

<sup>56</sup> "Sa sūrya prati puro na udagā ebhiḥ stomebhiretaśebhirebaiḥ/  
Pra no mitrāya varuṇāya vocohanāgasō aryaṃne agnaye ca/" *RV*, 7.62.2.

"Na te adevaḥ pradibau ni vāsate yadetaśebhiḥ patarai ratharyasi/  
Prācīnamanyadanu vartate raja udanyena jyotiṣā yāsi sūrya/" *ibid.*, 10.37.3.

"Aham sūryasya pari yāmyāśuciḥ paitaśebhirvahamāna ojasā/  
Yanmā sāvo manuṣa āha nirṇija ṛdhkkṛṣe dāsam kṛtvym hathaiḥ/" *ibid.*, 10.49.7.

<sup>57</sup> "Devānām cakṣuḥ subhagā vahantī śvetam nayantī sudṛśīkamaśvam/  
Uṣā adarśi raśmibhirśaktā citrāmaghā viśvamanuprabhūtā/" *ibid.*, 7.77.3.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*, 1.163.

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provide us an explicit beginning of the full winged horse-headed form of Viṣṇu at this stage in the *Ṛgveda*.

An interesting matter mentioned in the Vedic *Samhitā* is that the beheading motif is related with the knowledge of emancipation. After searching these informative references of the horse in the *Ṛgveda* we would try to analyse the references therein related to Dadhyaṅc Ātharvan who appears in the horse-headed form for introducing *madhuvidyā* to the aśvin brothers. The mythical story of the sage Dadhyaṅc Ātharvan<sup>59</sup> was developed in the later *Samhitā*,<sup>60</sup> *Brāhmaṇa*<sup>61</sup> and *Upaniṣad*.<sup>62</sup>

### 1.2.Horse-headed sage Dadhyaṅc Ātharvan:

In the Vedic mythology Dadhyaṅc, an ancient sage,<sup>63</sup> son of Ātharvan, is mentioned nine times in the *ṚV*.<sup>64</sup> He is kindled agni<sup>65</sup> and is mentioned with

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<sup>59</sup> Owing to his horse-head and his very name Dadhyaṅc Ātharvaṇa being conceptually associated with the steed Dadhikrā or Dadhikrāvan, he is invoked with the dawn and is praised when Agni kindled at the dawning of *uṣas*. In this way Dadhyaṅc Ātharvaṇa with the horse head and Dadhikrā, is represented in the form of a steed and get related to the sun. The horse is symbolic to the sun when the *uṣas* is said to lead the handsome white horse. A.A.Macdonell: *Op. cit.*,p.148.

<sup>60</sup> *TaiS*,5.1.4(4); *KathS*,19.4.

<sup>61</sup> *ŚB*,4.1.5; 14.1-4.

<sup>62</sup> *BṛU*,2.5,16-19.

<sup>63</sup> “Yamatharvā manuṣpitā dadhyaṅc dhiyamatnata/  
Tasmin brahmāṇi pūrvathendra ukthā samagmatārcannanu svarājyam/” *ṚV*,1.80.16.

<sup>64</sup> A.A: Macdonell.*Op. cit.* p. 141.

<sup>65</sup> “Tamutvā dadhyaṅgrṣiḥ putra Īdhe atharvaṇaḥ/  
Vṛtrahaṇam purandaram/” *ṚV*,6.16.14.

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Atharvan, Aṅgiras, Manu and other ancient sacrificers.<sup>66</sup> In the *ṚV* he is a divinity of some kind, but in the later *Samhitās* and the *Brāhmaṇas* he is metamorphosed into a teacher. In the *purāṇas* he reappears as Dadhicī.

Dadhyañc Ātharvan is described as having the head of horse in the *ṚV*. The main story about the great sage Dadhyañc Ātharvan is as follows:

Indra taught the wisdom of *madhuvidyā* or *pravargyavidyā* to Dadhyañc and warned him that if he gave away that secret wisdom to anybody his head would be cut off. Aśvin brothers wanted to be enlightened with knowledge and approached Dadhyañc to learn *madhuvidyā* from him. But conscious of Indra's threatening Dadhyañc refused to teach them the secret wisdom *madhuvidyā*. To overcome this obstacle Aśvins cut off his original head and fixed a head of horse on the trunk of Dadhyañc. With this horse head Dadhyañc taught them *madhuvidyā* and when the teaching was over, his horse head was cut off as forewarned by Indra. Then Aśvins brought the original head and fixed it in the accurate place of his body. This teaching of *madhuvidyā* by the horse headed sage Dadhyañc is relevant to the development of the horse headed form and also associated with learning and wisdom. It may be the earliest evidence of a head-transplantation, a horse head placed on human trunk for serving a specific purpose. This same story is also available in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*.<sup>67</sup> Sāyaṇa sheds some light on this vedic myth.<sup>68</sup> Some say that “the head of the sacrifice is the head of the

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<sup>66</sup> “Dadhyañc ha me gaṇṣaṃ pūrvo aṅgirāḥ priyamedhaḥ kaṇvo atrirmanuviduste me pūrve manurvidu/ Teṣāṃ deveṣvāyatirasmākaṃ teṣu nābhayaḥ/ Teṣāṃ padena mahyā girendrāgnī ā name girā//” *ibid.*, 1.139.9.

<sup>67</sup> *ŚB*, 14, 1.1.18-25.

<sup>68</sup> When Dadhyañc died, he left behind the horse's head. The gods searched for it and found it in a lake named *Saryanavat* at *Kurukṣetra*. With the bones of this horse head

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sacrificial horse, the elixir of immortality, Soma, revives the sacrificial animal, as the ocean waters feed the fiery head.”<sup>69</sup>

In the *ṚV* the deliberation of the secret knowledge *madhuvidyā* by horse headed Dadhyaṅc has been mentioned several times.

“Tadvāṃ narā sanaye daṃsa ugramāviṣkaṇomi tanyaturnavrṣṭim/

Dadhyaṅc ha yanmadhvārthavaṇo vāmaśvasya śīrṣṇā prayadīmuvāca//”<sup>70</sup>

In this context Sāyaṇa says in his commentary:

“Indro dadhīce pravargyavidyā madhuvidyāṃ copadiśya yadi imāṃ anyasmai vakṣasi śīraste chetsyāmīsyuvāca. Tato’śvinau aśvasya śīraścitvā dadhīcaḥ śīraḥ pracchidyānyatra nidhāya tatrāśvyam śīraḥ pratyadhatyāṃ. Tena ca dadhyaṅc ṛcaḥ sāmāni yajumṣi ca pravargya viṣayāṇi madhuvidyā pratipādanam brāhmaṇam ca aśvinā vadhyāpayāmāsa. Tadindro jñātvā vajreṇa tacchiro’tcchinat. Tathāśvinau tasya svakīyam mānuṣam śīraḥ pratyadhatyāmiti.”<sup>71</sup>

In another verse it is mentioned that the Aśvins provided a horse head to Dadhyaṅc Ātharvan’s and after that he revealed the whereabouts of *madhu* of *tvaṣṭṛ*:

“Ātharvaṇāyāśvinā dadhīce’śvyam śīraḥ pratyairayatam/

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Indra slew the demons (*ŚB*, 14.1.1.14-15.). O’Flaherty, Wendy Doniger: *On Hinduism*, p. 463.

<sup>69</sup> O’Flaherty, Wendy Doniger: ‘loc.cit.’ p. 463.

<sup>70</sup> *ṚV*, 1.116.12.

<sup>71</sup> Commentary of Sāyaṇa on *ṚV*, 1.116.12, pp.719-720.

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Sa vāṃ madhu pravocadr̥tāyantvāṣṭraṃ yaddasrāvapikakṣe vāṃ//”<sup>72</sup>

O Aśvins, you set head of a horse on Dadhyañc Ātharvan - keeping his words he taught you the ‘honey’ (*madhuvidyā* pertaining to the sacrifice) concerning *Tvāṣṭraṃ* and also that (*madhuvidya*, the esoteric knowledge) which was to be kept in secrecy.<sup>73</sup> In this context Sāyaṇa says that:

“He aśvinau ātharvanāya atharvanaḥ putrāya dadhīce dadhyañcnāmne maharṣaye aśvaṃ aśvasaṃvandhi śiraḥ pratairayataṃ pratyadhataṃ tadīyaṃ mānuṣaṃ śiraḥ pracchiddya anyatra vidhāya aśvyena śiraṣā tamṛṣiṃ samayojayatamityarthaḥ. Sa ca vāṃ yuvābhyāṃ pravargyavidhyāṃ madhuvidyāṃ ca vakṣyāmīti purā kṛtāṃ pratijñāṃ r̥tāyan satyāmātmana icchan madhu madhuvidyāṃ tvāṣṭraṃ tvaṣṭurindrāllavdhaṃ pravocat proktavān. He dasrau darśanīyāvaśvinau vāṃ yuvayoḥ saṃvandhi yat apikakṣyaṃ chinnasya yajñaśirasah kakṣapradeśena punaḥsaṃdhānabhūtaṃ pravargyavidyākhyāṃ rahasyaṃ tadapi vāṃ yuvābhyāṃ prāvocadityarthaḥ.”<sup>74</sup>

According to Sāyaṇa’s commentary *madhuvidyā* is connected with *tvāṣṭā*.<sup>75</sup> The blatant meaning of *madhu* that rests on *tvāṣṭā*, is known as *tvāṣṭraṃ madhu* which is none other than the solar light.

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<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*, 1.117.22.

<sup>73</sup> Wilson, H.H: *Ṛgveda Saṃhitā. Vol. I.* pp.193-194.

<sup>74</sup> Commentary of Sāyaṇa on *ibid.*, 1.117.22, p. 739.

<sup>75</sup> *Tvāṣṭā* is a Vedic god related to the sun, the moon and fire. He is known as the revealer of forms (*rūpa-vikartā*), the keeper of the divine honey. The ‘honey’ that he guards is nothing other than ‘light’ that gets reflected on the moon, which delights the gods and soothes the mortals. The *Bṛhaddevatā* thus explains this concept. Thus, “the one of the

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In another verse of the *ṚV* the Aśvins win the heart of Dadhyañc and then with the horses head he teaches them *madhuvidyā*, the esoteric knowledge:

“Yuvam dadhīco mana ā vivāsa’atho śiraḥ prativāmaśvam vadat//”<sup>76</sup>

Sāyaṇa says in his commentary:

“Yuvām dadhīca ātharvaṇasya ṛṣeḥ manaḥ cittam śuśrūṣayā ā vivāsathaḥ paryacarataṁ. Atha anantaram tasminprīte sati aśvyam yuvābhyām pratihitam aśvasya smvandhi yat śiraḥ tat vām yuvām prati madhuvidyāmavadat. Sa ṛṣiḥ aśvena śirasā upadiṣṭvānityartha.”<sup>77</sup>

From the above discussion it is evident that *madhuvidyā*, the esoteric knowledge, is closely connected with Aśvins, the twin gods of healing and illumination. This Vedic account is mentioned in the *Bṛhadāraṇyak Upaniṣad* in reference to the description of *madhuvidyā*.

### 1.3.Madhuvidyā:

*Madhuvidyā* has both a gross and a subtle meaning, portrayed as a highest secret or the esoteric *vidyā*. This secret knowledge was diligently guarded by Indra lest anybody gets the secret. The doctrine of *madhuvidyā* is found in the fifth section of the second chapter of the *Bṛhadāraṇyak Upaniṣad* that constitutes a part of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. Most often it is quoted by some monotheists to exhibit this world as an absolute illusion. So the worldly matters are impertinent to realisation of the highest spiritual wisdom—*nirguṇa brahman*. Similar accounts, upholding the grand

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thousand parts of the solar rays that gets reflected on the moon and that which resides in the earth in fire is the honey (*madhu*) that rests on *tvastā*.” *Bṛhaddevatā*,3.17.

<sup>76</sup> *ṚV*,1.119.9b.

<sup>77</sup> Commentary of Sāyana on *RV*,1.119.9b, p.750.

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illusionism, are found in the *Maitreyi Brāhmaṇa* of the same *Upaniṣad*<sup>78</sup> which precedes the *madhuvidyā* chapter.<sup>79</sup>

As *madhuvidyā*, the all-pervasive ‘*madhu*’ is present in all, so all are united with the all-inclusive reality, the Self. When observed from a single view point as well as in totality, the essence of all is the Self, which is none other than the unconditional Brahman.<sup>80</sup>

The first passage of the *madhu brāhmaṇa* considers the world as honey of all beings and all beings as honey of the world. Here honey is a symbol that indicates something which is achieved through much effort. As the honeybees collect honey from many flowers and store it in one place, likewise through arduous activities a thing of importance is achieved. This comprehensive vision of the mystic honey, *madhuvidyā* show that not only the things, but their mutual products and fulfilments all portray ‘honey’ or the Self, the sweetest of all, since it is the ultimate ‘Bliss’ or *ānanda*.

There are fourteen illustrations in the text to emphasize the above statement.<sup>81</sup> Here self not only represents the basic principle of *madhu* in heart of things, but represent the entire world with all things, beings, lives and all gods as bliss. It is god, the Ruler of the universe, as Brahman is described as “sarveṣāṃ bhūtānāṃ adhipati, sarveṣāṃ bhūtānāṃ rājā” in this passage of *Bṛhadāraṇyak Upaniṣad*. The vision culminates in a higher

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<sup>78</sup> *BU*,2.4.

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*,2.5.

<sup>80</sup> Śankara’s introduction to Madhu Brāhmaṇa of *BU*,2.5.1.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*,2.5.1-14.

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consciousness, an insight of a higher order where the entire universe is contained within a vast boundless reality.<sup>82</sup>

Next the *Upaniṣad* quotes three verses of the *Ṛgveda Samhitā*<sup>83</sup> stating that the doctrine of mystic honey is given here, which was already revealed to the sage Dadhyañc Ātharvan by Aśvins. Sāyaṇa describes the verses with the help of a legend regarding the Indra, Dadhyañc, and the Aśvins in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*.

In the previous chapters of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, the *madhuvidyā* in its gross form is depicted along with the *pravargya karma*. According to Śaṅkara, the secret *vidyā* was indicated in the previous chapters and explicitly dealt with in the *Bṛhadāraṇyak Upaniṣad*.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> “....tad yathā rathānābhau ca rathanemau cārāḥ sarvve samarpitā evamevāsminnātmani sarvvāṇi bhūtāni sarvve devāḥ sarvve lokāḥ sarvve prāṇāḥ sarvva eta ātmanāḥ samarpitāḥ//” *BU*, 2.5.15. “Just as the spokes are fixed in the nave and rim of a chariot-wheel, so are all things, all gods, all worlds, all vital forces and all individual beings are fixed in the Self.

<sup>83</sup> The *BU* alludes to the Vedic *upākhyāna* by quoting a *mantra* from *RV*, 1.116.12: “Idaṃ vai tanmadhu dadhyaññātharvaṇo’śvibhyāmuṇvāca/ tadetadṛṣiḥ paśyannavocat/ Tadvānnarā sanaye daṃsa ugramāviṣkṛṇomi tanyaturna vṛṣṭim / Dadhyañ ha yanmadhvātharvaṇo vāmaśvasya śīrṣṇā pra yadīmuvāceti//” The next *mantra* quoted from the *RV* (1.117.22) runs like this: “Idaṃ vai tanmadhu dadhyaññātharvaṇo’śvibhyāmuṇvāca/ tadetadṛṣiḥ paśyannavocat/ Ātharvvaṇyāśvinā dadhīce’śvyamśiraḥ pratyairayatam/ Sa vām madhupravocadṛtāyan tvāṣṭram yaddasrāvapi kakṣyaṃ vāmiti//” *ibid.*, 2.5.17.

<sup>84</sup> Śaṅkara’s Commentary on *BU*, pp.603-604.

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The honey or *madhu* contextual to self-knowledge defined in the *Upaniṣad* is none other than the Self, supreme Brahman, the indomitable source of bliss and knowledge. *Madhuvidyā* the intuitive knowledge of *madhu*, as described in the *Upaniṣad*:

“Idaṃ vai tanmadhu dadhyaññātharvaṇo’śvibhyāmuṇvāca/ tadetadṛṣiḥ paśyannavocat/ Puraścakre dvipadaḥ puraścakre catuspadaḥ/ Puraḥ sa pakṣī bhūtvā puraḥ puruṣa āviśaditi/ Sa vā ayaṃ puruṣaḥ sarvvāsu pūrṣu puri śayo nainena kiñcanānāvṛtaṃ nainena kiñcanāsaṃvṛtaṃ//”<sup>85</sup>

*Madhuvidyā* ends with a famous quote from the *ṚV* <sup>86</sup> “He assumed one form and the other, thus becoming every form; Indra on account of his *māyā* (mysterious powers, his powers of knowledge or through superimposition as Saṅkara explains), is perceived as manifold, for to him are yoked tens and thousands of horses (infinite senses of the infinite living beings).”<sup>87</sup> The *BU* provides the hidden meaning of the *mantra* - “He himself is the horses (the sense organs). He is verily the ‘tens’ and the ‘thousands’, many and infinite. This is Brahman, without prior or posterior, without interior or exterior. This

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<sup>85</sup> *BU*,2.5.18.

<sup>86</sup> “Rūpaṃ rūpaṃ pratirūpo vabhūva tadasya rūpaṃ praticakṣaṇāya/ Indro māyābhiḥ pururūpa īyate yuktā hyasya harayaḥ śatā daśa//”*ṚV*,6.47.18.

<sup>87</sup> “Idaṃ vai tanmadhu dadhyaññātharvaṇo’śvibhyāmuṇvāca/ tadetadṛṣiḥ paśyannavocat/ Rūpaṃ rūpaṃ pratirūpo vabhūva tadasya rūpaṃ praticakṣaṇāya/Indro māyābhiḥ pururūpa īyate yuktā hyasya harayaḥ śatā daśeti/ Ayaṃ vai harayo’ayaṃ vai daśa ca sahasrāṇi vahūni cānantāni ca, tadetad brahmāpūrvvamanaparamanantaramavāhyamayamātmā brahma sarvvānubhūtityanuśāsanam//”*BU*,2.5.19.

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is the Self, Brahman, the perceiver of everything. This is the teaching of the *Upaniṣads*.”<sup>88</sup>

In the *Samhitā* part we observe the symbolic connection of the divine steed with the sun as well as find the mythical conception of the great Vedic seer Dadhyañc Ātharvan, the reason behind the beheading as transferring of secret knowledge *madhuvidyā* to the Aśvins which developed in the Brāhmaṇic part with some variations. In the Brāhmaṇic era we come across about the relevance of severed head in myths and rituals.

## **2.Brāhmaṇic Part:**

### **2.1.Aśvamedha or Horse sacrifice:**

The horse symbolising sovereignty and power is used as the sacrificial animal in a royal ritual. Yet it is not considered as an asset of royalty. The horse stood for material gains and military strength, indifferent to the mystical traditions of the Vedic time. Later on the *aśva* or horse occupied a cosmological significance in ancient Sanskrit literature.

The word *aśva* is derived from the root *as* which means to pervade, to grasp or to eat. As in the *Nirukta* the word means “aśnute adhvānam, mahāsano bhavatīti vā.”<sup>89</sup>

The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* begins with the description of the horse of *aśvamedha* sacrifice. This sacrifice as described in the *Upaniṣad* is thoroughly a symbolic one. There is an impressive depiction of the *aśva* that

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<sup>88</sup> Śaṅkara’s Commentary on *BU*, pp.694-696.

<sup>89</sup> *Nir*,2.27.

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symbolises the whole universe.<sup>90</sup> Here the extensive imagination with an infinite expansion that symbolizes the entire range of existence under an all subsuming of a horse. The essentials of time, space and energy, are immersed in the ‘Horse’.<sup>91</sup>

Nevertheless, there are four probable meaning of the word *aśva*—firstly it indicates the ordinary horse sacrificed at the altar. Secondly it may signify the cosmic horse that equates with *Prajāpati*.<sup>92</sup> Thirdly it may mean the

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<sup>90</sup>“Om uṣā vā aśvasya medhasya śraḥ sūryaścakṣurvātaḥ prāṇo vyāttamagnirvvaiśvānaraḥ saṃvatsara ātmā aśvasya medhyasya/ Dyauḥ prṣṭhamantarīkṣamudaram prthivī pājasyām diśaḥ pārśve avāntaradiśaḥ parśava ṛtavo’ngāni māsāścārdhamāsāśca parvānyahorātrāṇi pratiṣṭhā nakṣatrāṇyasthīni nabho māṃsāni/ Ūvdhyaṅskitāḥ sindhavo gudā yakṛcca klomānaśca parvvatā oṣadhayaśca vanaspatayaśca lomāni udyan pūrvvārdho nimlocṇ jaghānārdho yadvijṛmbhate tadvidyotate yadvidhūnute tat stanayati yanmehati tad varṣati vāgevāsyā vāk//” *BU*, 1.1.1

<sup>91</sup> Sri Aurobindo describes the horse that fills up the regions by its being, pervades time, hurtles through space, and bears on its speed men, gods and titans. It is the Horse of the Worlds - and yet the Horse sacrificial. Sri Aurobindo: *The Upaniṣads*. p.400

<sup>92</sup> In the *BU*, here it is mentioned that—“Hayo bhūtvā devā’nava’d gandddharvvānarvvā’surānaśvo manuśvān, samudra evāsyā bandhuḥ samudro yoniḥ.” ‘*Samudra*’ is said to be the *bandhu* and *yoni* of this *aśva* which primarily signifies the sea. It may here signify the vast unbound reality from where this horse has come into existence. Regarding this context Śaṅkara in his commentary noted that—“Samudra eveti paramātmā; vandhurvvanddhanam vadyate’sminniti/ Samudro yoniḥ kāraṇamutpattiṃ prati/ Evamasau śuddhayoniḥ śuddhasthitiriti stūyate; ‘apsu yonirvā aśvaḥ’ iti śruteḥ/ prasiddha eva vā samudro yoniḥ//” Śaṅkara relying upon etymology renders it as *paramātmā* from where all beings come into existence —“*samutpada dravanti bhūtāni asmin*”. As rendered by Śaṅkara, the word *bandhu* here means *bandhana* which is befitting for horse. Brahman, the unbound reality is the tie-post of this horse. It is as well its origin. Thus, this horse seems to signify the manifest form *Prajāpati* of the unmanifest Brahman. *BU*, pp.30-31.

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entity, who is to be immolated to eternity in a symbolic manner. Fourthly it symbolise the sun that is a symbol of horse in the Vedic texts.

In ancient Vedic tradition *Aśvamedha* or sacrificial killing of a horse was one of the four most important rites. The word sacrifice or ‘*Yajña*’, at the time of the *RV*, had a very symbolic meaning, as it is understood from hymns of the *Puruṣa Sukta* (*RV*,10.90). The hymns describe the process of creation as explicit great sacrifice. When the *puruṣa* overpassed the entire earth, the *devas* performed the sacrifice with the *puruṣa* himself as the ritual oblation.<sup>93</sup>

However, as the term literally means ‘horse sacrifice’ as evident in the ritual. It was a royal ritual to assure the wealth and good fortune of the king and his kingdom. The associate ceremonies were complex and elaborate rituals that lasted for a full year.<sup>94</sup> Its culmination was the sacrifice of a horse, where the king was the sacrificer.<sup>95</sup> It was a military celebration as stated *Aśvamedha* is the *Kṣatriya*’s sacrifice.<sup>96</sup>

The *Aśvamedha* as described in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* is a very complex ritual with full of symbolism. At first appearance the source may impression of being inconsistent in their association of various deities, symbol and the

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<sup>93</sup> “Yat puruṣeṇa haviṣā devā yajñamanvata/

Vasanto asyāsīdājyaṃ grīṣma idhmaḥ śaraddhaviḥ//

Taṃ yajñaṃ vahirṣi praukṣan puruṣaṃ jātamaḡrataḥ/

Tena devā ayajanta sādhyā ṛṣyaśca ye//

Tasmādyajñāt sarvahutaḥ sambhṛtaṃ pṛṣadājyaṃ/

Paśuntāṃścakre vāyavyānārāyaṇyān grāmyāśva ye//”*RV*,10.90.6-8.

<sup>94</sup> *ŚB*,11.2.5.4.

<sup>95</sup> *ŚB*,13 For the preparation and the rites of *Aśvamedha*.

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*, 12.4.1.

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meaning of the ritual. Hence the *Aśvamedha* poses serious difficulties due to the complexity of this symbolic ritual.

The *Ṛgveda* (1.163.2) says that the horse is a symbol of the Sun. Here *aśva* had a highly symbolic meaning. The seer praises the *aśva* as one given by Yama, harnessed by Trita, and first ascended by Indra. It was created out of Surya by the Vasus and its reins were held by Gandharva.<sup>97</sup> Yāska explains that as *aśva* was created from the sun,<sup>98</sup> a mantra to glorify Āditya can also be used for praising *aśva*.<sup>99</sup> *Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā* it is says, “In heaven is your highest birth, in air your navel, on earth your home.”<sup>100</sup> Here the horse is being symbolized by the sacrificial fire. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* says that *Aśvamedha* is the sun,<sup>101</sup> and that it is to be done year after year. This is how the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* describes the sacrificial horse of the *Aśvamedha*.<sup>102</sup> The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* also starts with the portrayal of the horse in

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<sup>97</sup> “Yamena dattaṃ tritta enamāśūnagindra eṇaṃ prathamam adhyatiṣṭhat/  
Gandharvo asya raśanāmagṛbhṇāt sūrādaśvaṃ vasavo nirataṣṭa//” *RV*, 1.163.2.

<sup>98</sup> “Īrmāntāsaḥ silikamadyamāsaḥ sat śūraṇāso divyāso atyaḥ/  
Haṃsā iva śreṇīso yatante yadākṣiṣurdivyamaṇmamaśvāḥ//” *RV*, 1.163.10.

<sup>99</sup> *Nir*, 4.13.

<sup>100</sup> *VS*, 11.12.

<sup>101</sup> *ŚB*, XIII.3.3.3.

<sup>102</sup> The head of the sacrificial horse is the dawn, the eye the sun, the breath the wind, the ear the moon, the feet the quarters, the ribs the intermediate quarters, the winking the day and night, the joints the half-months, the joining the months, the limbs the seasons, the trunk the year, the hair the rays of the sun, the form the Nakṣatra, the bones the stars, the ash the mist, the hair the plants, the tail hairs the tress, the mouth agni, the open mouth Vaiśvānara, the belly the sea, the anus the atmosphere, the testicles the sky and the earth, the *membrum virile* the pressing-stone, the seed the soma. *TaiS*, 7.5.25.

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*Aśvamedha* sacrifice.<sup>103</sup> A symbolic description of the sacrifice can be found in the *Upaniṣad*.

The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* elaborately discusses the horse sacrifice where it is to be left unobstructed and viewed as the sun itself. The *Brāhmaṇa* emphasises his indomitable nature.<sup>104</sup> The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, follows this explanation and associates the sacrifice with the sun.<sup>105</sup> It is evident from this analysis that *Aśvamedha* has its basis in the Vedic sun-worship.

According to the Vedic hymns, the unhindered movement of the sun and its symbolic representation in the form of horse indicates the sovereignty of the performer of the sacrifice. This is why the horse is left to go around for an entire year and is sacrificed at the end.<sup>106</sup> Therefore the end of a year has a symbolic connection with the offering of horse at the end. This is depicted as having *saṃvatsara* as it is the *ātman*. The sacrifice of the horse actually might have also started with man's greed for the horse's flesh from the pre-Vedic times. S.P. Singh suggest that as the concept of horse-sacrifice implies the link with sovereignty, it is to be rendered by the royals only and others such as the Brāhmins and sages could only practise it in a symbolic way.<sup>107</sup>

In this context Hillebranth suggests that:

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<sup>103</sup> *BU*, 1.1.

<sup>104</sup> *ŚB*, XIII.4.2.16.

<sup>105</sup> *BU*, 1.2.7.

<sup>106</sup> Singh, Satya : *Upanisadic Symbolism*, p.320.

<sup>107</sup> Singh, Satya : *ibid.*, *Op. cit.* p.334.

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“in so far as it is clear that the horse at the horse sacrifice was addressed in terms appropriate to divinity: it cannot seriously be doubted that for the time being the horse was considered as being a sense divine, nor that in the offering the horse represented the embodiment of the sun.”<sup>108</sup>

He also thinks that the horse of the horse-sacrifice is a sun fetish, which supports the theory that Dadhikrāvan is the sun in horse shape but does not support Dadhikrāvan to be the horse. He indicates that the theriomorphic form of the sun is represented by a real horse in the horse sacrifice.<sup>109</sup>

### 2.2. Severed head of Viṣṇu:

In case of Viṣṇu’s severed head and transplantation with a horse head we come across in different Vedic texts, the earliest element of the myth can be traced back in the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*<sup>110</sup> of *Kṛṣṇayajurveda*. It found expression in different versions of the different Vedic texts such as, the *Āraṇyaka*<sup>111</sup> *Brāhmaṇa*<sup>112</sup> and others. The essence of the myth found in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* is described in this way— once upon a time the gods Agni, Indra, Soma, Makha, Viṣṇu and Viśvadevas wanted to perform a sacrifice and agreed to share the credit of the result of performance among them. Viṣṇu first became glorious with the fame and carried away the whole credit. Viṣṇu with his bow stepped forth and stood resting his head at the end of the bow. The gods dared not to attack him but gave assurance to the ants

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<sup>108</sup> Keith, A.B: *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads*, Part 2. p.190

<sup>109</sup> Keith, A.B: *ibid.*, ‘loc. cit.’ p.190.

<sup>110</sup> *TaiS*, 4.4.9.

<sup>111</sup> *TaiĀ*, 4 & 5.

<sup>112</sup> *ŚB*, 14.1.1; *PañB*, 7.5.6.

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about constant enjoyment of food; ants gnawed the bow string of Viṣṇu. When the bow string was cut, the end of the bow springing assunder cut off Viṣṇu's head.<sup>113</sup> After having fallen, the head of Viṣṇu became the yonder sun and the rest of his body stretched out over top towards east.<sup>114</sup> The gods felt that it is necessary to transplant the head of Yajña Viṣṇu and then requested to Aśvins to do this work. For performing this job Aśvins, supposed to be impure, were blessed with a pot full of soma juice or *graha pātra* as their share in the sacrifice which was still impermissible for them. Taking this assurance from the gods Aśvins then fixed the horse head to Yajña Viṣṇu's trunk.

It is important to notice that not only in the above mentioned Brāhmaṇic myth of reference like “*yajña vai Viṣṇu*,” but also from other texts we come across to note that Yajña itself is Viṣṇu and the head of Yajña that is cut off, is the solar itself. It is well expressed in the reference “*asāvā ādityo bhabatu*,” and thus the head of Viṣṇu became Āditya. In another place Āditya is associated with *aśva* as in the account “*asau vā ādityo vṛṣāśvaḥ*” and this idea is very clearly expressed in the account “*aśvasya niṣpadasi*.” *Kāṭhaka Saṃhitā* refers to the same story where Sāyaṇa brings the concept of Yajñapuruṣa, meaning of that could be understood as Yajña Viṣṇu in a personified anthropomorphic form.<sup>115</sup> The myth of the severed head of Yajña Viṣṇu in the Vedic *Ākhyānas* became a source of inspiration for the later purāṇic myth that should not be understood merely for its story value but for its symbolic significance.

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<sup>113</sup> *ibid.*, 14.1.1.7.

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.*, 14.1.1.10.

<sup>115</sup> Babu, Sridhara: *Hayagrīva the Horse Headed Deity in Indian Culture*, p.7.

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Therefore, this perplexing account of Yajñā-Viṣṇu's beheading is interlinked with *pravargya*<sup>116</sup>. In the previous section Viṣṇu appears as a solar deity in the early Vedic age. One should understand the subtle dissimulation within Yajña or Makha as a process of ritualistic performance, and also Yajña or Makha's personification with Viṣṇu. Yajña is not only identified as Viṣṇu, whereas it also a particular process to any ritual performed in front of a sacred fire, often with mantras.<sup>117</sup> The compatible antecedent of Yajña as a process and as a deity is a requisite to comprehend the symbolic significance of the *pravargya* ritual. Moreover, Viṣṇu's identification with Yajña or Makha is not mislaid his associations with the sun. Therefore, when Viṣṇu's head is cut off, it fell with the sound 'ghrīn', and on declining the head became yonder sun. This alliance of horse with the sun systematizes the myth with the concept of replacement of Viṣṇu's severed head with Horse. This reflects link between the myth about the severed head of Viṣṇu and the *pravargya* ritual.

In this sacrificial process the fallen head of Viṣṇu stands as a symbol for the *mahāvīra* pot which is supposed to be the primary part of the sacrificial performance like the head which is most important part in the whole body. While Viṣṇu, the great hero lost his head, the vital sap flowed from him. Among the gods Indra reached him first and applied the sap to the limbs of

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<sup>116</sup> The *pravargya* is a vedic ritual that is performed just before or at the beginning of the Soma sacrifice. The central object in this ritual is an earthenware pot or *mahāvīra* vessel placed on a fire until it's burning hot. Here the *mahāvīra* vessel is a symbol and also identified with the sun. The pot also other names such as 'gharma'—'heat' and 'mahāvīra'—'great hero'. The etymologies of the words *Gharma*, *Pravargya*, *Mahāvīra* and *Samrāj* are given here by the ŚB, 14.1.1.10, 11.

<sup>117</sup> Nigal, S.G: *Axiological Approach to the Vedas*, pp.80-81.

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his own body and became possessor of the glory of Viṣṇu.<sup>118</sup> Being possessed of Makha, Indra became *makhavat*.<sup>119</sup> Then the gods went on worshipping with that headless sacrifice.<sup>120</sup> The secret of pure essence which Indra has possessed, is interconnected with the idea of *madhuvidyā*, through which the head of Yajña could be again put on and this Yajña became completely known to Dadhyañc Ātharvan.<sup>121</sup> *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* links both of these stories like the story of Dadhyañc and the story of Makha-Viṣṇu or Yajña-Viṣṇu in an interesting manner. In the subsequent passage of the text we see that Indra, aware of the sacrificial mystery, wanted to keep it secret. He warned Dadhyañc, that he would lose his head if he revealed the secret doctrine of the headless sacrifice.<sup>122</sup> However, Aśvin brothers convinced Dadhyañc to reveal the secret wisdom or *madhuvidyā* and upon being told about Indra's warning. They removed Dadhyañc's original head, hid it, and temporarily replaced it with the head of a horse to get the secret knowledge *madhuvidyā*.<sup>123</sup> Later, when Indra cut off Dadhyañc's head as he had warned, the clever Aśvins replaced it with Dadhyañc's original head.<sup>124</sup>

The above mentioned mythical account confers some valuable points:

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<sup>118</sup> *ibid.*, 14.1.1.12.

<sup>119</sup> *ibid.*, 14.1.1.13.

<sup>120</sup> *ibid.*, 14.1.1.17.

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*, 14.1.1.18. cf. 4.1.5.18.

<sup>122</sup> *ibid.*, 14.1.1.19.

<sup>123</sup> “Dadhyañc hayanmdhvāthārvaṇo vām aśvasya śīrṣṇā pradīmuvācA/” *RV*, 1.116.12b.

“Ātharvaṇāyāśvinā dadhīce'svyam śīraḥ pratairayatam/

Sa vām madhu pravocadṛtāyam tvāṣṭrīm yaddasrāvapikakṣyaḥ vām/” *ibid.*, 1.117.22.

<sup>124</sup> *ŚB*, 14.1.1.20-25.

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- ❖ Viṣṇu is identified with Yajña, which in its twist is related to the yonder sun.
- ❖ The Yajña Viṣṇu's head been mislaid and regained by the sacrificial rite *pravargya*.
- ❖ Without head, the sacrifice would stay unfinished. Thus the rite is essential to regain the mislaid head.

J.C Heesterman, to turn to the Vedic ritual-texts pointed out that the standard components and practices of the ritual allude to the head of the sacrifice, and its execution signifies the severing and restoration of the head. He also states that:

“It will be clear that the severing and restoration of the head in the language of the ritual system can only be an abstract expression. At first sight though, one would be inclined to think of the head of the sacrificial victim. But it is exactly here that the abstract nature of the expression stands out clearest. There cannot be any question of the victim's head, the victim is not explicitly beheaded, it is even forbidden to make offerings of the victim's head.”<sup>125</sup>

However, in another place he is fairly pointed out that “it can hardly be doubted that originally the animal was beheaded at the sacrificial post.”<sup>126</sup>

Heesterman has dealt with this topic in his two long articles. But as he has stated in one of his articles, “... one might perhaps expect a full-scale treatment of the symbolism of the severed head...Such a treatment is not

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<sup>125</sup> Dange, Sindhu S: *The Severed Head in Myth and Ritual*. In: Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Vol. 72/73, No. 1/4, (1991-1992), p.492.

<sup>126</sup> Dange, Sindhu S: *ibid.*, ‘loc. cit.’p.492.

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expected here.”<sup>127</sup> He has not dealt with the symbolism of the severed head. But S. Sindhu Dange thinks that it is indeed a later stage, when the accessories of the ritual are metaphorically said to be the head of the sacrifice. There lurks the idea of the actual severed head of the victim in all these details. To unravel the mystery of the severed head, it will be worthwhile to turn to the myths regarding the severed head, as found in the Vedic ritual-texts, as also in the later literature.<sup>128</sup> Thus to turn to the original position, the concept of the severed head of a sacrificial victim, or an *asura*, or a god or a sage or a human being or an image of a goddess, has a cluster of beliefs around it, which has made it assume symbolic significance in myth, literature as well as actual ritual practice.<sup>129</sup> O’Flaherty Wendy Doniger, identifies the beheading sacrifices of Viṣṇu and the placement of the horse’s head on the sage Dadhyañc as the Vedic antecedent to the Hayagrīva myth, based on the fact that the horse head contains the secret wisdom.<sup>130</sup>

Some think that the performance and action of the sacrificial ritual, aim at the atonement of an initial wrong and at reintegration. In the present myth conceitedly broken covenant is the first wrong; way out from integrity is broken promise out of self-centred ungenerous pride. This initial differentiation that warrants Makha-Viṣṇu, the sacrifice, to lose its head,

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<sup>127</sup> Dange, Sindhu S: *ibid.*, p.487.

<sup>128</sup> Dange, Sindhu S: *ibid.*, ‘loc. cit.’p.487.

<sup>129</sup> Dange, Sindhu S: *ibid.*, p.496.

<sup>130</sup> O’Flaherty, Wendy Doniger: *Women, Androgynes, and Other Mythical Beasts*, pp.218-219.

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wants to be unfinished by a reintegration, which is the purpose of the rites of the sacrifice.<sup>131</sup>

The transplantation of horse head on the trunk of Viṣṇu's headless body is indirectly highlighted in the Vedic literature. The ritualistic viewpoint of it is much concentrating on the symbolic way of expression that the fact of headless sacrifice is completed with the performance of *pravargya*. The identification of *pravargya* with the head of Yajña Viṣṇu and in addition to its identification with the horse head is the basis of the concept that Lord Viṣṇu became a horse headed one.

### **3.Āranyaka Part:**

Though the *Brāhmaṇas* have great significance in the history of Indian think tank, those ideas gradually awakened the philosophical speculations in the period of the *Āranyakas* and the *Upaniṣads*. The main contents of *Āranyakas* are no longer concerned with the rules of performing sacrifices and explaining the ceremonies, but the sacrificial mysticism, sacrificial symbolism and the priestly philosophy have sprouted in the *Āranyakas*. We can trace the pursuit of this priestly philosophy in the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Āranyakas* having partly sacrifice and partly the holy word Brahman, inseparably united with its highest principle. The doctrine of the inner self or *ātman*, as the origin of all beings, was born outside the priestly circles and ran contrary to the priestly religion. This resulted in the emergence of the *Upaniṣads*. It is in the *Upaniṣad* that Hayagrīva appears first in the Vedic literature.

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<sup>131</sup> Kramrisch, Stella: *The Mahāvīra Vessel and the Plant Pūtika*. In: Journal of the American Oriental Society, Vol. 95, No. 2 (1975), pp.223.

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#### **4. Hayagrīva in the Hayagrīvopaniṣad:**

The concept of the supreme Brahman or the supreme soul or *ātman* is the main theme of the *Upaniṣads*. Hayagrīva is raised to the status of the supreme lord of knowledge and wisdom in the *Hayagrīvopaniṣad*. Besides the principal *Upaniṣads* only a few other *Upaniṣads* are connected with the Veda. Most of them are religious rather than philosophical works which contain the doctrines and views of philosophical schools and religious sects of a much later period. And many of them are nearly related to the *purāṇas* and *tantras*.

The ‘*Hayagrīvopaniṣad*’, a minor *upaniṣad*, belongs to the *Atharvaveda*, written probably in the *post-mahābhārata* period. It is one of the one hundred eight *Upaniṣads* specified in the *Muktikopaniṣad* of the *Suklayajurveda*. Of the one hundred and eight *Upaniṣads*, ten belong to the *Ṛgveda*, nineteen to the *Kṛṣṇayajurveda*, thirtytwo belong to the *Śuklayajurveda*, sixteen to the *Sāmaveda* and thirtyone belong to the *Atharvaveda*. *Hayagrīvopaniṣad* belongs to the *Vaiṣṇava* sect, which worships Viṣṇu, and is associated with the *Atharvaveda*.<sup>132</sup> For its Viṣṇu avatāra-oriented sectarian nature, and for having tantric mantras in the text, *Hayagrīvopaniṣad* may be a relatively a later *Upaniṣad*.

The *Hayagrīvaopaniṣad* has twenty verses divided into two chapters. Its narrative is a discourse between sage Nārada and Brahmā. Some mantras are related to Hayagrīva, some with respective seers, presiding deities, some with the power of meditation and others with the results achieved through the *japas* and prayer in glorification of the *Brahmavidyā*. The text begins

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<sup>132</sup> John, Nicol Farquhar: *An outline of the religious literature of India*, p.364.

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with a śānti mantra, benedictory verse, which is an invocation to the god Viṣṇu, Indra, Garuḍa, Sūrya and Bṛhaspati praying for welfare of all.<sup>133</sup>

The *Upaniṣad* begins with sage Nārada approaching Brahmā requesting him to impart the most sublime *Brahmavidyā*, by which all sins are destroyed. On attaining proficiency in *Brahmavidyā*, possessed with the glory of devouring all but oneself, one becomes Brahman. Exercising the powers of sentient action, desire and knowledge, one can lead to the state of the unqualified Brahman, where one can realise that there is nothing other than the Brahman. Brahmā then declares that one, who knows the mantras with Hayagrīva as their presiding deity, attain the knowledge of the scriptures, *śrutis*,<sup>134</sup> *smṛtis*,<sup>135</sup> *itihāsas*, and *purāṇas* and is conferred with wealth and is blessed with the glory of eclipsing everything:

“Hayagrīvadaivatyānmantrānyo veda sa śrutismṛtītiḥāsapurāṇāni veda/

Sa sarvaiśvaryavānbhavatī//”<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> “Aum bhadraṁ karṇebhiśṛṇuyām devāḥ/

Bhadraṁ paśyemākṣabhīryajatrāḥ/

Sthirairāṅgaistuṣṭuvāṁsastanūbhiḥ/

Vyaśema devahitaṁ yadāyuh//

Svasti na indro vṛddhaśravāḥ/

Svasti naḥ pūṣā viśvavedāḥ/

Svasti nastārksyo ariṣṭanemiḥ/

Svasti no bṛhaspatirdadhātu//

Aum śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ//”

<sup>134</sup> Heard knowledge.

<sup>135</sup> Memorized knowledge.

<sup>136</sup> *HayaU*, 1.1.

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The *Hayagrīvopaniṣad* refers to the spiritual and material profits of reciting mantras in praise of Lord Hayagrīva, an embodiment of the holy mind, of the Vedas, and the divine knowledge who restored the Vedas. Individuals who can perceive the mantras revealed by Hayagrīva, the lord of knowledge can achieve proficiency in the *śrutis*, *smṛtis* and can attain all kinds of wealth.

The second section of the *Upaniṣad* explains how one can attain material delights and salvation through the chanting of precise Hayagrīva mantras. Here Brahmā narrates different mantras relating to the worship of Hayagrīva. In the first mantra salutation has been made to Hayagrīva as Viṣṇu, a form transcending the universe of gross phenomena, the form of sentient bliss, the king of all *vidyā*'s—

“Viṣvottīrṇasvarūpāya cinmayānandarūpine/

Tubhym namo Hayagrīva vidyārājāya svahā svahā namaḥ//”<sup>137</sup>

The word *vidyārāja* in the mantra is a Sanskrit word meaning king of knowledge. Hayagrīva is also known as *vidyārāja*.<sup>138</sup> *Vidyā* means knowledge. Two different kinds of knowledge mentioned in the *śruti* texts are *parāvidyā*- the higher knowledge and *aparāvidyā*- the worldly knowledge. *Parāvidyā* is concerned with Brahman, the highest reality, which leads the being to realization of self. *Parāvidyā* is the same as *Brahmavidyā* by which one can get rid of all kinds of worldly bondage and bring about the direct realization of the supreme reality and finally one could realize the imperishable *ātman*. *Aparā vidyā* is variously understood by Advaitin and Viśiṣṭādvaitin. Advaitin consider *aparā* to be of lower knowledge leading to empirical existence. Knowing the real nature of this lower knowledge or

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<sup>137</sup> *HayaU*, 1.1.

<sup>138</sup> He is stated as *vidyā-sahāyavān* in the MBh, 12.347.18.

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*aparā vidyā*, one should endeavor for the higher knowledge or *parā vidyā* that would result in the understanding of self as Brahman. Whereas according to the Viśiṣṭādvaitin, both *parā* and *aparā* are the means to the realization of the supreme Brahman. They emphasize that *aparā vidyā* comprises the knowledge of the Vedas, should be performed according to the circumstances in life, free from attachment to desired result. Contrarywise if the *karma*'s are done with affection to its yielding, it directs to transmigratory existence. But through the knowledge of *parā vidyā* one has the direct realization of Brahman. Thus accordingly both *parā* and *aparā vidyā* could lead to realization of the supreme. The *Hayagrīvopaniṣad* has also amalgamated the prospect of higher knowledge and the glorification of Hayagrīva raising the *avatāra* to the stature of Brahman.

In the second mantra of the text it has been said that “Ṛgyajuḥsāmarūpāya vedāharana karmane/ praṇavodgīthavapuṣe mahāśvaśirse namaḥ svahā svahā namaḥ//”<sup>139</sup> This mantra identifies Hayagrīva as the rescuer of the three Vedas i.e., *Ṛgveda*, *Yajurveda* and *Sāmaveda*. This Hayagrīva is the embodiment of the *praṇavodgītha* and possessed of the head of a great horse. Here the verse refers to Hayagrīva as ‘*praṇavodgīthavapuḥ*’.<sup>140</sup>

In the third mantra Lord Hayagrīva has been referred to as *udgītha* and *praṇavodgītha*. That is to say, Hayagrīva is personified as having the form of these two sacred spiritual seeds. Hayagrīva with the combination of *haya* and

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<sup>139</sup> *HayaU*, 1.2.

<sup>140</sup> *Praṇava* refers to *omkāra* which is confederate with these three letters ‘A’ ‘U’ and ‘M’. These three letters refers to Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Mahēśvara respectively. In *Manu Saṃhitā* it has been says that *Brāhmaṇa* pronounce the *praṇava* before start to recite Vedas. According to Pātañjalsūtra, *praṇava* signify the god ‘*tasya vācaka praṇava*’ and by this god is worshiped.

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*udgītha* is the lord of the lords, lord of all kinds of wisdom who is the personification of all the Vedas who imparts incomprehensible knowledge—

“Udgītha praṇvodgītha sarvavāgīśvresvra/

Sarvavedamayacintya sarvam bodhaya bodhaya svāhā svāhā namaḥ”//<sup>141</sup>

Here Hayagrīva is personified as *Vāgīśvara*, “*Vācām īśvara iva vāgīśvara*”. *Vāgisvarī* in the feminine form refers to the goddess Sarasvatī, the presiding deity of *vidyā*. Hayagrīva not only protects all types of creatures of the world, but He is also known to have imparted knowledge to goddess Sarasvatī herself, the presiding deity of learning. Thus, without His grace, no one can obtain good knowledge whether sacred or secular.

Thereafter we see that the enumeration starts with the seers and concludes with meditation of the three mantras. In the *dhyānamantra* of the *Hayagrīvopaniṣad* a word “*Hayagrīvaupāśmahe*” and the “*Śaṃkhacakra mahāmudrā pustakāḍhyam caturbhujam*” indicate that Hayagrīva is recognized as anthropoid in form. The iconographical description of Hayagrīva presents him to be effulgent like the moon and adorned with the *śaṃkha*, *chakra* and *pustaka* held in his three hands, and the *mahā-mudra* gesture of the fourth hand.

*Hayagrīvopaniṣad* provides the twenty nine syllable mantra like “Om śrīm hlaum om namo bhagavate hayagrīvāya viṣṇave mahyam medhām prajñām prayaccha svāhā”<sup>142</sup> as well as the thirty four syllable mantra “Om śrīm hrīm aiṃ aiṃ aiṃ klīm klīm sauh sauh hrīm om namo bhagavate hayagrīvāya

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<sup>141</sup> *HayaU*, 1.3.

<sup>142</sup> *HayaU*, 1.4.

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mahyaṃ medhāṃ prajñāṃ prayaccha svāhā”<sup>143</sup> at the end of the first chapter. This mantra consisting of twenty nine syllables and thirty four syllables is the *bīja-akṣara Hsaum̐*. The *Upaniṣad* aims at increasing knowledge of beings. Here it is to be noted that, the word “*viṣṇave*” meaning “unto Viṣṇu”, indicates Viṣṇu, mentioned in the twenty nine syllable mantra.

In the second chapter, Brahmā is seen as expounding the *Brahmavidyā* through the monosyllabic mantra of Hayagrīva. The chapter begins with Brahmā reciting the *ekākṣara* (one-syllable) mantra (*bīja*) of Hayagrīva, the root syllables being *Lhouṃ* (*Hsouṃ*). The mantra “*Lhouṃ* (*Hsouṃ*) *sakala samrājya sidhiṃ kuru kuru svahā*” reveals the secret of the great Vedic sayings “*prajñānam ānandam brahma*”<sup>144</sup> “*Tat tvam̐ asi,*”<sup>145</sup> “*Ayaṃ ātmā brahma*”<sup>146</sup> and “*Ahaṃ brahmāsmi.*”<sup>147</sup> The words “*Lhouṃ*” and “*Hsouṃ*” are having the same vowels, though they are different. They lend worldly pleasures and salvation respectively. It is claimed that recitation of this mantra gives one pleasures in life and after death it gives salvation. It helps one to realize the true spiritual meaning of the Vedic dictum or the *Mahāvākyas*. Four supplementary Vedic mantras are also incorporated in this *Upaniṣad*.

The *Hayagrīvopaniṣad* ends with the declaration that one who recites the *Hayagrīvopaniṣad* on the 11th lunar day, *ekādaśī* (sacred to Viṣṇu) would become a great man by the blessings of Hayagrīva and also achieve

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<sup>143</sup> *ibid.*, 1.5.

<sup>144</sup> *BrU*, 3.9.28; *AitU*, 3.3.

<sup>145</sup> *ChāU*, 6.8.7.

<sup>146</sup> *MuU*, 2; *BrU*, 2.9.

<sup>147</sup> *BrU*, 1.4.10.

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salvation. The text ends with a prayer that this knowledge of Brahman, taught by the mantra ending with '*Aum Namō Brahmanē*', would never leave the heart of the devotee.

To conclude, this inspirational text associating Hayagrīva with *Brahmavidyā*, declares Hayagrīva as the supreme lord of knowledge and wisdom. Although Viṣṇu is having a horse headed form, the idea of recovering the Vedas is indicated here. This is elaborately discussed in the *Mahābhārata*.

In the *Mahābhārata* a mythical description of the horse-headed deity Hayaśiras is found as the retriever of the Vedas. The discussion in the *Upaniṣad* has maintained its integrity regarding the supreme nature of Hayagrīva and at the same time accepted the episode of Hayagrīva as retriever of the Vedas which indicates similarity with Hayaśira Viṣṇu.

Vedic mantras are symbolic in character. The beginning of the symbol worship, the horse as sun or sun steed and his relationship with solar god Viṣṇu has begun during the period of the *Samhitās* and gradually it extended into the *Brāhmaṇas*, *Āraṇyakas* and in the *Hayagrīvopaniṣad*. The *Brāhmaṇa* literature deals with the commentaries on the myths, rituals, ceremonies and sacrifices, symbolic worship of the horse through *Aśvamedha* Yajña or ritualistic performance of sacrifice. In the *Āraṇyaka* literature we see the symbol to refer to the deity. We have also found the case of Viṣṇu's severed head and replacement by a horse head which found its expression in different versions of different Vedic texts such as, the

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*Brāhmaṇas*<sup>148</sup> and the *Āraṇyakas*.<sup>149</sup> Interestingly we do not come across a direct evidence of Hayagrīva Viṣṇu in the Vedic *Samhitā* and the *Brāhmaṇas*. Subsequently we come across an entire *Upaniṣad* dedicated to Hayagrīva Viṣṇu known as *Hayagrīvopaniṣad*. Thus the evolution of the horse headed deity as the supreme lord of knowledge and wisdom called Hayagrīva, has taken place.

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<sup>148</sup> *ŚB*, XIV,1,1; *PañB*, VII,5,6.

<sup>149</sup> *TaiĀ*, IV & V.

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# CHAPTER III: HAYAGRĪVA IN THE MAHĀBHĀRATA



The horse-headed form of Viṣṇu as conceived in the Vedas, transformed in to *avatāra* in the Epic period. The *avatāra*<sup>1</sup> is believed to be coming down of God in the mortal world to protect the world from chaos and evil, and to instil righteousness. During the time of the epics, Viṣṇu had already evolved into a deity of greater importance. Not only He is revered as supreme, but there is a vast mythological elaboration in the post Vedic texts like the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas* which developed around Viṣṇu. In the post Vedic period Lord Viṣṇu gradually emerged as a prominent and independent deity and a trend to conceive the form of Viṣṇu combining with human and animal is seen. The mythology of the absurd theriomorphic form of Lord Viṣṇu can be evidenced in various *parvas* of the *Mahābhārata*. Lord Viṣṇu appears as a lion headed deity as Nṛsiṃhāvatāra or a horse-headed deity having the name of Hayagrīvāvatāra.

After dealing with the Vedic circumstance about the origin of the concept of the horse headed deity, we shall discuss now this issue in the *Mahābhārata*. The incarnation of the half-horse & half-man Viṣṇu was variously known as Hayagrīva, Hayaśīras or Hayaśirṣa, Hayāsya etc as found in the *Mahābhārata* and some *Purāṇas*. Amongst them the main mythological narrative of Hayaśirṣa, the horse headed manifestation of Viṣṇu, finds first mention in the śānti parva of the *Mahābhārata*, where we learn how the horse-headed Viṣṇu brings back the stolen Vedas and kills the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha. The story of the *Mahābhārata* symbolizes the triumph of the supreme knowledge being guided by the god of righteousness over the

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<sup>1</sup> The term *avatāra* is derived from the Sanskrit root *ava tṛ*. The term *avatāra* means descent, form, manifestation or incarnation and refers to the animal or human forms that the supreme God takes on earth.

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demons of passion and darkness and that led Viṣṇu to become the Lord of learning and wisdom.

We would now discuss about the chronological development of Hayagrīva, understanding of myth and the central myth of Hayaśira Viṣṇu in the *Mahābhārata*.

### 1.Chronological Development of Hayagrīva:

There are several epithets or names with a horse-head appearance, mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* as Hayamukha, Asvaśira, Hayaśiras, Hayagrīva, Vājigrīva, Vaḍavāmukha, and these various names refer to different figures which appear chronologically in the several *parvas* of the epic. In the *Mahābhārata* the names mentioned as Hayamukha, Hayaśira, Asvaśira, and Vaḍavāmukha appear prominently as epithets to Viṣṇu Hayagrīva. Interestingly, here we come across some references of the name Hayagrīva sometimes as a king<sup>2</sup> and sometimes as a demon<sup>3</sup>. An exquisite study of the original text of *Mahābhārata*, illuminates the idea of Hayagrīva Viṣṇu.

#### 1.I. Ādi Parva:

The name **Hayamukha** in the *ādi parva* of the *Mahābhārata* refers to one who has the face of a horse evidently the bird Garuḍa,<sup>4</sup> the king of birds. Garuḍa, the devourer in both Hindu and Buddhist pantheon is the mythological Lord of the birds.<sup>5</sup> In the *Mahābhārata* we find Garuḍa being eulogized by gods:

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<sup>2</sup> *MBh*, 5.72.15; 12.25.22-31.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, 1.59.23; 1.61.10; 1.65.24; 5.128.49-50.

<sup>4</sup> Garuḍa is the son of Kaśyapa and Vinatā.

<sup>5</sup> Robart Beer: *The Handbook of Tibetan Buddhist Symbols*, p.74.

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“Tvamindrastvaṃ hayamukhastvaṃ śarvastvaṃ jagatpatiḥ/  
Tvam mukhaḥ padmajo viprastvamagni pavanastathā//”<sup>6</sup>

Nīlakaṇṭha in his commentary of the *Mahābhārata*, named *Bhāratabhāvadīpa*<sup>7</sup> says that Hayamukha is none other than Hayagrīva *avatāra*—‘*Hayamukha Hayagrīvāvatāra*’, but here it is not clearly understood whether Hayamukha is Viṣṇu or not. But the commentator of the *Bhāratakaumudī*<sup>8</sup> states clearly that Hayamukha is a form of Viṣṇu—‘*Hayamukha Hayagrīvo Viṣṇuḥ*’. Here it is mentioned that Garuḍa himself is depicted as ‘stvaṃ Hayamukha Hayagrīva Viṣṇu.’ In BORI edition of the *Mahābhārata* the verse related to Hayamukha appears in the annotation.

According to the purāṇic legends, Garuḍa is the son of Kāśyapa and Vinatā. Garuḍa is also an ancient symbolic form of agni who carries the seed of sacrifice to the gods as the Indo-European fire-bird carries the ambrosia.<sup>9</sup> In numerous mythical traditions Garuḍa manifest as a great eagle named Suparṇa (beautiful winged), Garutmān (solar bird), Sarparati (enemy of serpent), as well as Khageśvara and Pakṣīrāja. The name Garutmān reminds us of the Vedic idea related with tārksya, a winged horse. Garuḍa is later recognized as Viṣṇu’s vehicle and an avowed enemy of the snakes or nāgas. He evokes obstacle towards snakes, snake-bites and all manners of poisoning. This typical enmity between hunter bird and serpents is frequent in several myths. He assumed the form of a bird-man, a combining creature

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<sup>6</sup> *MBh*, 1.19.16.

<sup>7</sup> Nīlakaṇṭha’s commentary of Poona edition.

<sup>8</sup> Siddhantavāgīsa’s commentary of Viśvabānī edition of *Mahābhārata*.

<sup>9</sup> Jan Gonda: *Aspect of Early Visnuism*, p.148.

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of half-eagle half-man. This zoomorphic alteration extends throughout India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand and South East Asia. As a deity in the Buddhist tradition, he is confederate to Vajrapāṇi and Hayagrīva, the *sādhana* of these three deities together is known to remove obstacles and illnesses especially nāga related afflictions.<sup>10</sup>

1.II. Āraṇyak or Vana Parva:

Viṣṇu incarnated as **Aśvaśiraḥ** to destroy the demons, is mentioned in the *āraṇyak* or *vana parva* of the *Mahābhārata*. Here Hayaśiras or Aśvaśiras signifies Viṣṇu as a horse-headed god—

“Viṣṇunāśvaśiraḥ prāpya tathādityāṁ nivatsyātā/

Garbhe vadhārthaṁ daityānāmajñātenoṣitaṁ ciraṁ//”<sup>11</sup>

In the critical edition of BORI Aśvaśiraḥ is meant to be Viṣṇu himself and the god is called the son of Aditi. Aditi is often regarded as the mother earth as mentioned in the *Ṛgveda*<sup>12</sup>, *Atharvaveda*<sup>13</sup> and especially in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*<sup>14</sup>. Motherhood is her main characteristics and this side of her nature is a younger development as suggested by Keith, Pischel and Hardy. Aditi is stated to be the earth and Viṣṇu as the sacrifice. A passage of *TS*<sup>15</sup> discussed that the sacrifice in the form of Viṣṇu is related to have entered the earth. Jan Gonda thinks that this relation may point to the chthonian

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<sup>10</sup> Robart Veer: *Op. cit.*, p.76.

<sup>11</sup> *MBh*, 3.299.12.

<sup>12</sup> *RV*, 1.72.9.

<sup>13</sup> *AV*, 12.1.61; 13.1.38.

<sup>14</sup> *ŚB*, 5.3.1.4; 7.4.2.7.

<sup>15</sup> *TS*, 6.2.4.2.

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character often inherent in the Horse and this fact also shows the wide range of ideas and conceptions during the epic period that represent Viṣṇu.<sup>16</sup>

But the commentary *Bhāratakaumudī* explained the word *Aśvaśiraḥ* — ‘*Aśvaśiraḥ tadākhyaṇ sthānam*’ meant to be a sacred place instead of Viṣṇu. However, in the eighteenth chapter of *Droṇa parva*, it is considered as a sacred place, where Arjuna dreams to meet Śiva along with Kṛṣṇa.

### 1.III. Udyoga Parva:

A reference of **Hayaśiraḥ** Viṣṇu is mentioned in the *udyog parva*. Nārada portrays the *pātāla* (nether world) as *nāgaloka* (the realm of snakes) where at during propitious occurrences, Hayaśiraḥ with brilliant golden appearance is evoked as ‘*suvarṇābha*’, and the world is filled with chanting of Vedic hymns—

“Atra divyam hayaśirāḥ kāle *parvaṇi parvaṇi*/  
Uttiṣṭhati suvarṇākhyam vāgbhirāpūrayan jagat//”<sup>17</sup>

It is inferred here that Viṣṇu manifests as the Horse-headed one. Nīlakaṇṭha gave an explanation that *suvarṇākhyam jagat* to be *veda prañca*, i.e., the entire Vedas with all contents. As indicated by him, Viṣṇu in the horse-headed appearance spells the Vedic notes in his own voice that are recited by the Brāhmaṇas.

The Siddhāntavāgīśa commentary of the *Mahābhārata* mentions Hayaśiras by the word *Āditya*, whereas critical edition mentions the word *divyo* in

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<sup>16</sup> Gonda. Jan: *Aspect of Early Viṣṇuism*, p.148.

<sup>17</sup> *MBh*, 5.97.5.

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exchange for Āditya. *Bhāratakaumudī*, commentary of Siddhāntavāgīśa states that,

“Ādityaḥ Ādityāḥ putraḥ, suvarṇamiva ākhyāyaye kāntau ucyate iti suvarṇākhyāḥ, hayaśirā hayagrīve/ Viṣṇuḥ parvvaṇi parvvaṇi kālē sarvadā darśapaurṇamāsyoh, vāgbhiḥ brahmacāriṇaṃ vedadhvanibhiḥ, jagadāpūrayan atra uttiṣṭhati.”<sup>18</sup>

If we take on this indication with ‘*ādityo*’ as an epithet to Hayaśiraḥ, it shows the involvement of the horse headed one with the Āditya. This reminds us of the general connection between the Sun and the Steed; and also of the identification of Viṣṇu that appears later when, the horse headed Viṣṇu revives the Vedas. In this passage Viṣṇu appears as Hayaśiras, the son of Aditi and is connected with the Vedic hymns that indicate the central myth of Hayaśira Viṣṇu, where he recovered the Vedic texts from the demons.

In another passage of the same parva we come to know that Kṛṣṇa was the slayer of demon Madhu and Kaiṭabha as well as a demon named **Hayagrīva**—

“Ekārṇve ca svapatā nihatau madhukaiṭabhau/  
Janmāntaramupāgamya hayagrīvastathāhataḥ/”<sup>19</sup>

Here it appears that like Madhu and Kaiṭabha, there was another demon Hayagrīva by name who was also slain by Lord Kṛṣṇa. *Bhāratakaumudī* clearly identifies Hayagrīva as an abductor of the Vedas—“*Hayagrīva*

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<sup>18</sup> Siddhantavagisha, Haridas: *Mahābhārataṃ*, Part 15, p.904.

<sup>19</sup> *MBh*, 5.128.50.

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*nāmāsura vedahārī*”. Interestingly the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha are abductors of the Vedas as stated in the *śānti parva*, but name of the demon Hayagrīva does not appears here as a performer of the same deed.

#### 1.IV. Śānti Parva:

The name **Aśvaśira** instead of Hayaśira appears in the *śānti parva* of the *Mahābhārata*. Bhīṣma tells about a beautiful region called Badarī, the abode of Nara-Nārāyaṇa:

“Yatra sā badarī ramyā saro baihāyasaṃ tathā/  
Yatra cāsvaśirā rājan! vedān pathati śāśvatān/”<sup>20</sup>

Aśvaśiras reads the eternal Vedas. In the commentary of this verse the commentator shows Aśvaśira as a seer (*munīḥ*)—“*Aśvaśirā nāma munīḥ*.”<sup>21</sup> According to Jan Gonda, “the Aśvaśira form of Lord Viṣṇu is said to be for reading the eternal Vedas” which connects Aśvaśira-Viṣṇu with the eternal Vedas.

We find another aspect of the Horse headed one in *śānti parva*, which brings to our memory Viṣṇu’s association with Yajña. Lord Viṣṇu reveals himself as **Hayaśira** to sage Nārada and says, “I receive *havya*<sup>22</sup> and *kavya*,<sup>23</sup> brought with devotion in my horse-headed appearance in the north-western ocean.” This indicates Lord Hayaśira-Viṣṇu’s involvement in Yajña or sacrifice—

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<sup>20</sup> *MBh*, 12.126.3.

<sup>21</sup> According to the commentary, Bhāratikaumudī of the *MBh*, 12.123.3.

<sup>22</sup> Good oblation of the gods.

<sup>23</sup> Offerings of the manes.

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“Ahaṃ Hayaśiro bhūtvā samudre paścimottare/  
Pivāmi suhutaṃ havyaṃ kavyaṃ ca sraddhayāṇvitam//”<sup>24</sup>

The *śānti parva* depicts the four *vyūhas* of Lord Viṣṇu and subsequently proclaims **Hayaśira** or **Hayagrīva** as having evolved from Aniruddha.<sup>25</sup> Here Viṣṇu is revealed by the epithet Aniruddha instead of Hayaśira or Hayagrīva. This concept is developed in the later *Pañcarātra*<sup>26</sup> texts which

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<sup>24</sup> *MBh*, 12.326.56.

<sup>25</sup> “Te’nuśiṣṭā bhagavatā devāḥ sarṣigaṇāsthā/  
Namaskṛtvābhagavate jagmurdeśānyathepsitān//  
Gateṣu trivivaukaḥsu brahmaikaḥ paryavasthitāḥ/  
Didṛkṣurbhagavantāṃ tamaniruddhatanausthitāṃ//  
Taṃ devo darśayāmāsa kṛtvā hayaśiro mahat/  
Sāṅgānāvartayanvedān kamaṇḍalugaṇitradhṛk//  
Tato’śvaśirasāṃ drṣṭvā taṃ devamamitaujasāṃ/  
Lokakartā prabhurbrahmā lokānāṃ hitakāmyayā//  
Mūrdhnā praṇamya varadaṃ tasthau prāñjaliragrataḥ/  
Sa pariṣvajya Devena vacanaṃ śravitastadā//  
Lokakāryagatīḥ sarvāstvaṃ cintaya yathāvidhi/  
Ghātā tvaṃ sarvabhūtānāṃ tvaṃ prabhūrjagatoguruḥ/  
Tvayyāveśitabhāro’sthaṃ dhṛtiṃ prāpsyāmyathāñjasā//  
Yathā ca surakārye te aviṣhyaṃ bhaviṣyati/  
Prādurbhāvaṃ gamiṣyāmi tadātmajñānadeśikaḥ//  
Evamuktā hayaśirastatraivāntaradhīyata/  
Te’nānuśiṣṭo brahmāpi svaṃ lokamacirādgataḥ//  
Evameva mahābhāgaḥ padmanābhaḥ sanātanaḥ/  
Yajñeṣvagraharaḥ prokto yajñadhārī ca nityadā//”*MBh*, 12.327.79-87.

<sup>26</sup> The *Pañcarātra* is a sect of the *Vaiṣṇavas*. The earliest reference of which may be found in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (13.6.1) in which the Puruṣa Nārāyaṇa is said to have conceived the idea of *Pañcarātra satra* or a sacrificial rite to be continued for five days.

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provide us a complex classification of the various forms of Lord Viṣṇu. Here it is noted that a few number of *Pañcarātra* texts refer to Hayagrīva as an emanation from *Samkarṣana vyūha* whereas *Mahābhārata* expresses Aniruddha as the source of Horse-headed one. P. Gangadhara epithets Hayagrīva is an emanated form of *vyūha*<sup>27</sup> known as Aniruddha in his article titled, “*Iconography of Hayagrīva, a new light*”.

At one instance we come across a detailed description of Lord Nārāyaṇa as a great sage named **Vaḍavāmukha** who stands for the benefit of the mankind—

“Nārāyaṇo lokahitārthan̄ vaḍavāmukho nāma maharṣi purābhavat/  
Tasya merau tapastapyataḥ samudra āhuto nāgataḥ/  
tenāmrṣitenātmagātroṣmṇā samudraḥ stimitajalaḥ kritah/  
svedaprasyanandasadṛśaścāsyā lavaṇabhābo janitaḥ/ uktaścāpeyo  
bhaviṣyasi/ etasya te toyaṇ̄ vaḍavāmukhasangitena pīyamānaṇ̄

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In the *Pañcarātra* circle, the word ‘*rātra*’ came to be differently interpreted. The apocryphal Nārādīya takes the word ‘*rātra*’ to mean knowledge and speaks of five kinds of ‘*rātras*’ namely *Tattva* (Cosmology or Ontology), *Muktiprada* (Liberation), *Bhaktiprada* (Devotion), *Yaugnika* (Yoga or meditation) and *Vaiśeṣika* (the objects of senses). But *Hayaśīrṣa Pañcarāra* text interpreted the word ‘*rātra*’ means night which is equated with the five *Mahābhūtas* and which holds that the Supreme Being is above all the qualities and being known cause’s salvation by dint of which man becomes identical with Viṣṇu himself. Śāstrī Kālī Kumār Datta: *Hayaśīrṣa Pañcarāra, Ādikāṇḍa*, p.i.

<sup>27</sup> *Vyūha* is one of the five aspects of the supreme lord, other aspects being *para*, *vibhava*, *antaryāmī* and *arcā*. In the *antaryāmī* aspect the god resides in the hearts of all and in the *arcā* aspect he manifests himself in the visible or *vigraha* form. Icons described as dhruvaberas in the *Vaikhānasāgama* appear to have symbolized the *para* aspect. Śāstrī Kālī Kumār Datta: *Hayaśīrṣa Pañcarāra, Ādikāṇḍa*, p.146.

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madhuraṁ bhaviṣyati/ tadetadadyapi vadavamukhasangitenanuvartina  
toyan samudran piyate//”<sup>28</sup> ‘Hayaśiraḥ Vaḍavāmukham’ (Nīlakaṇṭha)/  
‘Hayaśiro Vaḍavāmastakam’ (Siddhanta Bāgīśa)

In the past Nārāyaṇa used to be called Vaḍavāmukha, the great sage, for the benefit of mankind. While practising severe austerities on the mountain Meru, he summoned the ocean who disobeyed him. Angry at it, the sage, with the heat of his body, made the ocean water salty in taste like perspiration. Moreover, He said to the ocean that “you will be undrinkable, and then only when your water is drunk by Vaḍavāmukha it will become sweet as nectar.” Due to this curse ocean water are salty till date and not consumable by anyone except Vaḍavāmukha.<sup>29</sup>

This aspect of horse’s head takes us on the sea that reminds us about the discussion of the origin of *aśva* as clearly mentioned in the *Bṛhadāraṇyak Upaniṣad*.<sup>30</sup> Here it is noted that the epithets Vaḍavāmukha is connected with Viṣṇu through the incarnation of Nārāyaṇa in the form of Hayaśira. We

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<sup>28</sup> *MBh*, 12.329.48.

<sup>29</sup> The Sanskrit texts mention that there is an equine-head of vast ratios which roams through the seas. Blazing fires always emission from its mouth and these drinks up the sea-water. It always makes a roaring noise. It is called Vaḍavāmukha. The fire emission from it is called *Vaḍavānala*. The waters of the ocean are like clarified butter. The equine head drinks them up as the sacrificial fire drinks the libations of clarified butter poured upon it. The origin of the Vaḍavā fire is sometimes imposed to the wrath of Urva. *MBh* Vol. 10, p.533.

<sup>30</sup> “*Samudra evāśya bandhuḥ samudro yoniḥ*” i.e *Samudra* is said to be the *bandhu* and *yoni* of this *aśva*. This word primarily signifies the sea. It may here signify the vast unbound reality from where this horse has come into existence. *BU*, 1.1.2.

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have also found the epithet *Vaḍavāmukha* who is related with *Aurva*,<sup>31</sup> *Agni*<sup>32</sup> and also *Śiva*.<sup>33</sup>

*Aurva* is a sage, the son of *Urva* and grandson of *Bhṛgu*. The sage *Aurva* performed a sacrifice to destroy the followers of *Kārtavīryārjuna*. He was, however, persuaded against doing so. Angry by this *Aurva* discharged his anger into the sea, where it became a being with the face of horse, called *Hayaśiras*. This submarine fire came to be known as '*Vaḍavāgni*', also known as '*Vaḍavānala*' or '*Aurvānala*'. *Vaḍavā* is the submarine fire which when consumes the water of the ocean; the waters evaporate then solidify into rain and snow. Hopkins says that "... *Aurva*, who became the *Aurva* fire or mare's mouth, or Horse's head, *Hayaśiras* will consume ocean<sup>34</sup> and this fire is interpreted as *Viṣṇu*'s energy."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Hopkins, E Washburn: *Epic Mythology*, p.180.

<sup>32</sup> The supreme deity, in the unitary conception of universe, as agni *Vaḍavāmukha*, drinks the waters and lets it out again. As *samvartaka vahni* he is one with *samvartaka sūrya* and *anila*, fire, sun, and wind all being *samvartaka* are as the central elements in creation. Vedic hymns also say that agni lives in the centre of the sea or contained by the waters. *ibid.*, pp.99-100.

<sup>33</sup> There are also blazed the *asura* fire, known as the fire mare, *Vaḍavā*, the submarine fire that feeds on water (*MBh*.5.97.3). It had left *Siva* as his wrath, though the origin of the submarine fire outside the *śaiva* tradition was also differently accounted for an *asura* fire. Here it also says that, the entrance to hell was at the mare's head, *Vaḍavāmukha*, where the submarine fire, *Vaḍavānala*, issued from her mouth, in the southern ocean. Stella Kramrisch: *The Presence of Śiva*, p.403.

<sup>34</sup> *MBh*, 7.135.22; 1.170. 53; 180.22.

<sup>35</sup> *MBh*, 12.343.60.

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The supreme deity, in the unitary conception of the universe, in the form of Agni Vaḍavāmukha, swallowed the waters and then again let it out. As *samvartaka vahni*, he is equated with *samvartaka sūrya*, and *anila*, the central elements in creation.<sup>36</sup> Vedic hymns also say that agni lives in the centre of the sea or contained by the waters.<sup>37</sup>

In the *RV* we read that the rivers collect water for the pleasure of the ocean fire.<sup>38</sup> This may be a reference to the submarine fire, subsequently named Vaḍavāmukha and visualized as an undersea volcano, formed like a mare's head.<sup>39</sup> Some say that Vaḍavāmukha was situated in the South Pole, and said to consume the waters of the ocean.<sup>40</sup> According to the purāṇic eschatology, at the time of dissolution, the Vaḍavāmukha explodes or erupts disaster that destroys the world.

References to Śiva as the mare fire are available in some places throughout Sanskrit literature. The *MBh* says that Śiva's mouth is the mare's head.<sup>41</sup> In this context Doniger quotes P.C Roy:

“Thou art the Vaḍavānala, mare fire, mare's head that ranges within the ocean, ceaselessly vomiting fire and drinking the saline waters as if they were sacrificial butter.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Hopkins, E Washburn: *Epic Mythology*, p.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, pp.99-100.

<sup>38</sup> *RV*,2.35.3.

<sup>39</sup> Manansala, Paul Kekai: *Quests of the Dragon and Bird Clan*, p. 398.

<sup>40</sup> Manansala, Paul Kekai: *ibid.*, ‘loc. cit.’ p. 398.

<sup>41</sup> *MBh*.5.97.3.

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According to her, the submarine mare ought to be read as a symbol of energy, female sexuality, or power blocked by authority. She points out that the fire of Śiva's third eye is an anti erotic fire, blazing forth to counter the tormenting erotic fire. In *Matsyapurāṇa* it is mentioned:

“Śiva reduced Kāma to ashes, and the fire from his third eye soon yawned wide to burn the universe. But then, for the sake of the world, Śiva dispersed that fire among mangoes and the moon and flowers and bees and cuckoos—thus he divide the fire of Kāma. That fire that had pierced Śiva inside and outside, kindling passion and affection, serves to arouse people who are separated, reaching the hearts of lovers, and it blazes night and day, hard to cure.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> O'Flaherty. Wendy Doniger: *Siva: The Erotic Ascetic*, p.291.

<sup>43</sup> “Vabhūva vadane netraṃ tṛtīyamanalākulaṃ/  
Rudrasya raudravapuṣo jagatsaṃhārabhairavaṃ//  
Tadastikasthe madane vysphārayata dhūrjjaṭiḥ/  
taṃ netravisphūliṅgena krośatāṃ nākavāsināṃ//  
Gamito bhasmasyāt tūrṇaṃ kandarpaḥ kāmidaṛpakah/  
Sa tu taṃ bhasmasyāt kṛtvā haranetrodbhavo'onalah//  
Vyajṛmbhata jagaddagdhūṃ jvālāhūṅkāraghasmaraḥ/  
Tato bhavo jagaddhetorvyabhajjātavedasaṃ//  
Sahakāre madhau candre sumanaḥsu pareṣvapi/  
Bhṛṅgeṣu kokilāsyēṣu vibhāgena smarānalam//  
Sa vāhyāntaraviddhena hareṇa smaramārgaṇaḥ/  
Rāgasnehasamiddhantardhāvaṃstīvrahutāśanaḥ//  
Vibhaktalokasaṃkṣobhakaro durvvārajṛmbhitaḥ/  
Samprāpya snehasamprktaṃ kāmīnāṃ hṛdayaṃ kila//  
Jvalatya'aharniṣaṃ bhīmo duścikitsyamhukhātmakaḥ/  
Vilokya harahūṅkāra-jvālābhsmakṛtaṃ smaraṃ//” *MatP*, 154.250-255.

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Śiva's anger, the mare fire, and the fire of Kāma are combined in a verse addressed to Kāma.<sup>44</sup> Doniger declares that,

“The mare is a symbol of yogic power thwarted and rebounding against itself... the combination of anger and lust is at the heart of the myth of Śiva and the mare.”<sup>45</sup>

There also blazed the *asura* fire, known as the fire mare, Vaḍavā, the submarine fire that feeds on water.<sup>46</sup> It had left Śiva at his wrath, though the origin of the submarine fire outside the *śaiva* tradition was also differently accounted for an *asura* fire. It also says that, the entry to the hell was at the mare's head, Vaḍavāmukha, where the submarine fire, *Vaḍavānala*, issued from her mouth.<sup>47</sup>

### **Some Other References of Hayagrīva:**

In some passages of *MBh*, Hayagrīva is depicted as a king<sup>48</sup> where he is referred as a noble king performing many sacrifices and fighting losing

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<sup>44</sup> “Tava kuśumaśaratvṃ śītraśmitvamindor/  
Dvayamidayathārthaṃ dṛśyate madvidheṣu/  
Visrjati himagabhairagnimindumayūkhair/  
Tvamapi kusumavāṇān vajrasārīkaroṣi//” *AbhiS*, 3.3.

<sup>45</sup> O’Flaherty. Wendy Doniger: *Women Androgynes and Other Mythical Beasts*, pp.234-235.

<sup>46</sup> *MBh*, 5.97.3.

<sup>47</sup> Kramrisch. Stella: *The Presence of Śiva*, p.403.

<sup>48</sup> “Atra te rājaśārdula vartayiṣve kathāmimāṃ/  
Yadvṛttaṃ pūrvarājarperhayagrīvasya pārthiva//  
Śatrunhatvā hatasyājau sūrasyākliṣṭakarmanah/

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Asahāyasya dhīrasya nirhitasya yudhiṣṭhira//  
Yatkarma vai nigrahe śātravāṇaṃ/  
Yogaścāgryaḥ pālāne mānavāṇaṃ//  
Kṛtvā karma prāpya kīrti sujuddhe/  
Vājīgrīvo modate devaloke//  
Saṅtyakātmā samareṣvātātāyī/  
Śāstraiśchinno dasyubhirardyamānaḥ//  
Aśvagrīvaḥ karmaśīlo mahātmā/  
Saṁsiddhātmā modate devaloke//  
Dhanuryūpo raśanājyā śaraḥ stru-/  
ksruvaḥ khaṅgo rudhiraṃ yatra cājyaṃ//  
Ratho vedī kāmago yuddhamagni/  
Ścāturhotraṃ caturo vājīmukhyāḥ//  
Hutvā tasmin yajñavahnāvathārīn/  
Pāpānmukto rājasimhastaravī//  
Prāṇān hutvā cāvabhṛte raṇe sa/  
Vājīgrīvo modate devaloke//  
Rāṣṭraṃ rakṣan buddhipūrvam navena/  
Saṅtyakātmā yajñaśīlo mahātmā//  
Sarvālokaṇvyāpya kīrtiṃ manasvī/  
Vājīgrīvo modate devaloke//  
Daivīm siddhi mānuṣīm daṇḍanīti/  
Yoganyāyaiḥ pālayitvā mahīm ca//  
Tasmāt rājā dharmāśīlo mahātmā/  
Hayagrīvo modate devaloke//  
Vidvāṁstyāgī śraddhadhānaḥ kṛtajña/  
Styaktvā lokaṃ māuṣaṃ karmakṛtvā//  
Medhāvināṃ viduṣāṃ saṁmatānāṃ/  
Tanutyajāṃ lokamākramya rājā//  
Samyak vedānprāpya śāstrāpyadhītya  
Samyak rāṣṭraṃ pālayitvā mahātmā/

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battles heroically. In contradiction other passages portray Hayagrīva as an evil king of *Videha*,<sup>49</sup> finally killed by his subjects<sup>50</sup>. These accounts of Hayagrīva as a king reflect distinction between good and evil as do the supreme god and the demons.

Some references mention Hayaśiras as a demon with others Ayośiras and Ayośaṅku.<sup>51</sup> According to *MBh* a horse headed demon was born to the sage Kaśyapa and Danu,<sup>52</sup> the daughter of Dakṣa. During the epic period, one comes across obvious contradiction between the good *devas* and evil *dānavas*. Both gods and demons were gratified in the in the *RV*. *Devas* were the sons of Kaśyapa's wife Aditi, from where they got the name Āditya. The *asuras* were born to Danu and Diti, two other wives of Kaśyapa. Danu's children became *dānavas* and Diti's children became *daityas*. Both the

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Cāturvarṇyaṃ sthāpayitvā svadharme

Vājīgrīvo modate devaloke//” *MBh*, 12.25.22-31

<sup>49</sup> *Videha* is the country where Sītā's father Janaka is the king and the capital of *Videha* is *Mithilā*.

<sup>50</sup> “Hayagrīva videhānāṃ varapraśca mahaujasāṃ/

Vāhuḥ sundaravegānāṃ dīptākṣāṇāṃ pururavāḥ//” *MBh*, 5.72.15

<sup>51</sup> “Ayaḥśirā aśvaśirā ayaḥśaṅkuśca vīryavān/

Tathā gaganamūrdhā ca vegavāṅketumāṃśca yaḥ//

Svarbhānuraśvo'śvapatirvṛṣaparvājakastathā/

Aśvagrīvāśca sūkṣmaśca tuhuṇḍaśca mahāsurāḥ//” *MBh*, 1.59.23-24

“Ayaḥśirā aśvaśirā ayaḥśaṅkuśca vīryavān/

Tathā gaganamūrdhā ca vegavāṃścātra pañcamah//

Pañcaite jajñire rājan! Vīryavanto mahāurāḥ/

Kekayeṣu mahātmānaḥ pārthivarṣabhataṃ//” *MBh*, 1.61.10-11

<sup>52</sup> *MBh*, 1.65.24

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*dānavas* and *daityas* had demonic nature. The term *daitya* and *dānava* are matronyms having been derived from the mother Diti and Danu.

Finally in the *śānti parva* of the *Mahābhārata*, we find the first myth of Lord Viṣṇu who is identified with Nārāyaṇa<sup>53</sup> having the form of Hayaśīra, the horse-headed one. It is he who recovered the stolen Vedas and killed the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha.

For understanding mythological perspective of Hayaśīra Viṣṇu a detailed discussion about myth is made here.

## **2.Understanding of Myth:**

The primitive man was the pioneer who recorded encountered obstacles of the universe. His knowledge was invaluable and it was his intelligence that made him formulate the myths, based on realities, but veiled in allegories and illustrated through symbols. That perhaps, may be a reason why poet narrates myths because both are based on imagination. Myths are traditional tales shared by a group of people. Definition of the word ‘myth’ faced many problems. The term ‘myth’ is defined and discussed by many scholars. There are several meanings of myth available in dictionaries.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> The word Nārāyaṇa means “The one who rests on waters of creation.” The Manusmṛti states:

“Āpo nārā itī proktā āpo vai naraśūnavaḥ/

Tā yadasyāyanam purvam tena nārāyaṇa smṛtaḥ//”*Manu*, 1.10.

<sup>54</sup> The DK Oxford Illustrated Dictionary defines myth as “a fictitious tale usually involving supernatural persons, some popular idea or historical phenomena.” Cambridge International Dictionary of English which has defined the concept of myth as “an ancient story or set of stories, esp. explaining in a literary way the early history or set of stories of

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a group people or about natural events as well as facts.” The Random House Dictionary of the English Language defines myth in this way: “Myth is a traditional or legendary story, usually concerning some superhuman being or some alleged person or event, with or without a determinable basis of fact or a natural explanation, especially a traditional or legendary story that is concerned with deities or demigods and the creation of the world and its inhabitants.” The New Encyclopaedia Britannica says that, “Myth, a story, usually of unknown origin and at least partially traditional, that ostensibly relates actual events to explain some practice, belief, institution, or natural phenomenon, and that is especially, associated with religious rites and beliefs.” The word mythology defines both the study of myth and particular culture or religious tradition.” The definition of myth given in The Chambers Dictionary which regards it as an “ancient traditional story of gods or heroes, especially one offering an explanation of some fact or phenomenon; a story with a veiled meaning; mythical matter; a figment; commonly held belief that is untrue or without foundation.” Simpson & Roud interpret myth as “stories about divine beings, generally arranged in a coherent system; they are revered as true and sacred; they are endorsed by rulers and priests; and closely linked to religion. Once this link is broken, and the actors in the story are not regarded as gods but as human heroes, giants or fairies, it is no longer a myth but a folktale. Where the central actor is divine but the story is trivial the result is religious legend, not myth.” *American Heritage Dictionary* presents four meanings for myth.

- A traditional, typical ancient story dealing with supernatural beings, ancestors, or heroes that serves as fundamental type in the world view of people, as by explaining aspects of the natural world or delineating the psychology, customs, or ideals of society.
- A story, a theme, an object, or a character regarded as embodying an aspect of culture.
- A fiction or half-truth, especially one that forms parts of an ideology.
- A fictitious story, person, or thing.

From the above mentioned definitions it is clear that myth has an unknown origin. It is partially conventional, explains some natural experience and it is related to the social

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Scholars dealing with myth have taken in consideration the philosophical, theological and the scientific views and methods. According to Sigmund Freud, myths are indulgence in creation. Myths are reveries of the race, the imaginary fulfilment of the subdued desires of an individual.<sup>55</sup>

Carl Jung says that, myths are the manifestation of primeval psychic proceeds that may be even before the onset of the human race. They arise from the collective unconsciousness,<sup>56</sup> which are expressed through the Archetypes that are the good feelings of an individual in an unconscious state. Archetypes are elements of the collective unconscious, expressed in myths, religion, dreams, personal fantasies, as well as in literary works, that all provide knowledge. Walter Burkert states myths are traditional tales that are ancillary to collective importance.”<sup>57</sup>

Durkheim points out that the utility of myths is to create a cohesive societal structure governed by rules and habits.<sup>58</sup> He thinks that myth is a part of the religious system. Myth expresses in statements what ritual expresses in action and both are social functions with added essence of common well being. So both myth and ritual have symbolic implications; reflecting higher values in social life, and certain aspects of social structure. Raglan and

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belief, a practice and natural aspect. Myth is also defined as a traditional story of gods or heroes not based on facts.

<sup>55</sup> Strachey, James: *Sigmund Freud, The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, p.116.

<sup>56</sup> Jung, Carl: *Archetypes of Collective Unconscious, 20th Century Criticism*, p.37.

<sup>57</sup> Wellek, Rene and Warren, Austin: *Image, Metaphor, Symbol, Myth in Theory of Literature*, p.190.

<sup>58</sup> L. Durkheim cited by William Righter *Myth and Literature*, p.9.

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Robert Graves observe an organic link between myths and rituals. Edmund Leach believes that myths and rituals perform the same function of communicating the equivalent message. They are symbolic assertions of the social structure.

Canadian critic, Northrop Frye, linked the study of myth to literary works<sup>59</sup> Frye observes an innate relation between myth and literature also opines that in addition to the genres, even themes in literature have their origin in mythologies.

Claude Levi-Strauss a cultural Anthropologist defines:

“Myth is a language to be known, myth has to be told, it is a part of human speech. In order to preserve its specificity we must be able to show that it is both the same thing as language, and also something different from it.”<sup>60</sup>

He is a strong supporter of the need to study a myth methodically. In fact, his movement helps in flouting down a myth into its basic structural units and establishes points of similarity between them impartial of their origin. He thinks that each story will portray a positive function or “every ingredient unit will consist of a relative.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Frye, Northrop and Knights, L.C: *Myth and Symbol: Critical Approaches and Applications*, p.67.

<sup>60</sup> Barthes, Roland: *Mythologies*, p.86.

<sup>61</sup> Levi-Strauss, Claude: *Myth and Meaning*, p.88.

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Myth is a sub-discipline of comparative religious studies that has recently emerged as a specific discipline. The word myth roots from the Greek word ‘*mythos*’ which means speech, thought, narrative, story of the unknown. Plato refers to ‘*mythos*’ as a traditional tale whose reality and credibility is suspected.<sup>62</sup> He points to ‘*muthos*’ as a story that occurred in the past through which the deeds of gods and creation can be described. However, Aristotle uses the word ‘*mythos*’ to refer to the framework of the story and “the arrangement of the incidents.”<sup>63</sup> He used the term in his poetics to mean fable in the plot or narrative structure. The Greek classics are full of myths of numerous gods and supernatural beings and myths are used in place of images to project the hidden truths. Myth can be an image, a symbol, and a metaphor. The critical theories of structuralism and semiotics are the new trends which are giving a different meaning to the word ‘myth’. An ‘image’ is a mental enactment of perceptual experience; it is connected with sensation. An image is not only visual, also represents, something invisible, something inner. In this manner an image can be metaphoric. It can also be a symbol when it is used to highlight the implicit relation between the ‘sign’ and the ‘signified’. An image becomes a symbol when it is often used to represent something abstract. It is a general tendency to use myths as a part of imagery in literary works. An image can be drawn from myths to make collateral between ancient and existent conditions of life. The use of myth as

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<sup>62</sup> Alhaidari, Ali and Bhanegaonkar, S.G: Meaning, Origin and Functions of Myth: A Brief Survey. In: *International Journal of Social Science Tomorrow*. Vol. 1 No. 3, (2012). p.3.

<sup>63</sup> Alhaidari, Ali and Bhanegaonkar, S.G: *ibid.*, ‘loc. cit.’p.3.

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an image, a metaphor or a symbol is efficient and it transcribes life at diverse dimensions.<sup>64</sup>

Schelling in his *Philosophy of Mythology* does not accept its primitive character to explain nature. According to him myth is not the result of imagination but of necessity. The entire performance of myth is played on the vast condition of human consciousness—

“Myth has no existence outside human consciousness, but even though mythological process consists solely in determination of consciousness... This progress, must have really taken place must really have occurred in consciousness.”<sup>65</sup>

Bolton states myths reflect the result of collective consciousness. However, myths not only reform the cultural thinking and belief of society, and of individuals, but also reflect the attributes of a righteous individual and his behaviour. Moreover, He clarifies as to how myths touch humanism. The aperture of human emotion has been used by the myths to distinguish human being from other creatures in their aperture of emotion. They reflect the feelings of love, envy and grief etc. Understanding myths help civilization to appreciate their human nature. Pointedly, the characters of myths are so arranged as to reach out to people. This trait makes myth remarkable and perpetual. Myths also provide ethical lessons to overcome immoral behaviour.<sup>66</sup> Bolton adds other role of myths. Myths give a decent picture of

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<sup>64</sup> Foaks, R.A: Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*. In: *Romantic Criticism-1800-1850*. (1968), p.89

<sup>65</sup> Lal, D.K: *Myth and Mythical Concept in O'Neills Plavs*, p.10.

<sup>66</sup> Alhaidari, Ali and Bhanegaonkar, S.G: *Op.cit.*, p.5.

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the natural and social order. The universe begins with creation, after which all living beings are created and finally describes the creation of society.<sup>67</sup>

According to the allegorical theory, myths are allegories. Caldwell mentions Kirk's definition of myths which declare completely that myths bear lessons about life. Kirk states that myths: "are on one hand good stories, on the other hand bearers of important messages about life in general and life-within-society in particular."<sup>68</sup> Lessons are not explained directly. Reader has to read myth and bring out the message.

Campbell classifies purpose of myth into four categories:

1. Mystical

The mystical roles aim to draw people's attention to the mystery and wonder of the creation of the universe and its beings.

2. Cosmological

The cosmological function is to show the shape of the universe and its content.

3. Sociological

The sociological aspect mentions the 'ethical laws' which give people a charter to follow in their behaviours with others.

4. Pedagogical functions:

The pedagogical function is to teach people how to live a lifetime under different circumstances.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Alhaidari, Ali and Bhanegaonkar, S.G: *ibid.*, p.5.

<sup>68</sup> Alhaidari, Ali and Bhanegaonkar, S.G: *ibid.*, p.5.

<sup>69</sup> Alhaidari, Ali and Bhanegaonkar, S.G: *ibid.*, p.6.

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From the above mentioned discussions, one could soundly endorse Francis Ferguson's view that myth represents the "*deepest wisdom in man.*"<sup>70</sup>

Study of myth in any context is incomplete without some reference to Max Muller. Acknowledging the unsystematic and continuously changing status of religion or myth, Muller focused on the fact that supposition concerning man's ability to relate to religion and myth were still in elementary state. So research dedicated to communication and synthesis is desperately needed for success of the discipline. Religion and myth are pertinent to and influenced by theology, philosophy, philology, history, social and natural science.<sup>71</sup> Muller is credited to make mythological studies popular and his *Essays in Comparative Mythology* are the first most significant work in the area. He thinks that study of mythology is imperative as it leads to easy understanding of diverse religions and cultures. He felt that understanding of myth enables one to perceive the origin of religious thoughts and beliefs. He argued that queries on cosmology were fundamental and required a search of earliest myths.<sup>72</sup>

Devdutt Pattanaik, an Indian mythologist, defines myth as —

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<sup>70</sup> Francis, Ferguson: *The Human Image in Dramatic Literature*, p.161.

<sup>71</sup> The foundational work *Introduction to the Science of Religion*: four lectures delivered at the Royal Institution, February 19 (1882).

<sup>72</sup> Capps pp. 68-71.

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“a special kind of communication that establishes a relationship between the universe, society and humans... through three avenues: narratives, symbols and rituals.”<sup>73</sup>

Pattanaik perceives myths to be a sacred idea inherited over generations as well as an absurd, irrational, unsophisticated and fantastic concept about the world.<sup>74</sup>

He affirms that myth takes the form of narrative and allegory, and produces a power of truth. Narratives, symbols, and rituals appear to be communications of universal maxim.<sup>75</sup> He also views myths as allegories, and that narrative is nothing but a medium for expressing something else, nothing more...a vehicle for expressing something that is otherwise too abstract or profound complex experiences.<sup>76</sup> In this sense, myth is described as a world of illusions against rationality, a world of faith against the world of science; a traditional, culture-specific understanding of the world against a universal understanding of the world.

Modern approach finds in myth storage of ethnic history to project an ancient society and inter-relationship of various races. Malinowski puts—

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<sup>73</sup> Pattanaik, Devdutt: *Indian Mythology, Tales Symbol and Rituals from the Heart of Subcontinent*, p.14.

<sup>74</sup> Pattanaik, Devdutt: *ibid.*, p.9.

<sup>75</sup> Pattanaik, Devdutt: *ibid.*, p.115.

<sup>76</sup> Pattanaik. Devdutt: *ibid.*, p.194.

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“Myth... is not an explanation in satisfaction of a scientific interest but a narrative resurrection of a primeval reality, told in satisfaction of deep religious wants, moral cravings, social submissions, assertions, even practical requirements.”<sup>77</sup>

Myth is thus an active force of human civilization. It is creative imagery that gives pragmatic accounts of ancient believe and ethical knowledge. The myths are statements of reality for the primitive through which their activities, fortunes and lifestyle could be deduced. These are the mythical stories that have brought a social system with all its force. Myths convey the socio-political, religious and ethical virtues of a tradition, and enable realization of individual experiences in a worldwide perspective. This includes the intrusion of superhuman existence, as well as prospects of natural and cultural bidding.

The *Vedas*, *Upaniṣads*, *Āranyakas*, *Epics*, *Purāṇas* etc are excellent examples of stories of myths veiled in allegories and illustrated through symbols. The knowledge of mythology is made necessary to understand the concept of Hayaśira Viṣṇu as reflected in the epic, *Mahābhārata*.

### **3.The central myth of Hayaśira-Viṣṇu:**

In the *śānti parva* of *MBh*, we find the major mythological narrative of Hayaśira Viṣṇu. Janamejaya was very curious about the Hayaśira form of Lord Viṣṇu and asked Vaiśampāyana to tell him all about how Madhu and Kaiṭabha stole the Vedas from Brahmā, how Lord Nārāyaṇa in his horse

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<sup>77</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica Vol.15*, p.1133.

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headed form brought back the stolen Vedas and how he killed the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha.<sup>78</sup> Janamejaya inquired about the origin of the Horse headed form of Viṣṇu, who has been earlier mentioned as a receiver of offerings, *havya* and *kavya* for both the gods and manes. In response to the query the story of Hayaśira Viṣṇu was narrated. Vaiśampāyaṇa says to the king that all existent objects, in this world, are the result of a combination of the five primeval elements, a combination due to the prudence of the supreme Lord. The creator of the universe known as Virāṭa Puruṣa, the inner soul of all things and divested of attributes, again possessed of them, he is the supreme Lord Nārāyaṇa.<sup>79</sup>

### 3.I. Nārāyaṇa as Virāt Puruṣa:

Nārāyaṇa is the name of Viṣṇu, the absolute being who is considered as the supreme deity in *Vaiṣṇavism*. In the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, *Nārāyaṇa Sūkta*, *Puruṣa Sūkta* and *Srī Sūkta* of the Vedas, he is mentioned as the ultimate soul. The word ‘Nārāyaṇa’ depicts “The one who rests on waters of creation”. The *Manusmṛti* declares the waters to be ‘*naraḥ*’, for the waters

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<sup>78</sup> “Sa tathā naḥ śrūto brahman! kathyamānastvayānagha!

Yacca tat kathitaṁ pūrvvaṁ tvayā hayaśiro mahat//

Havya kavyabhujo Viṣṇurudakpūrvve mahodadhau/

Tacca dṛṣṭaṁ bhagavatā brahmaṇā parameṣṭhinā//”*MBh*, 12.335.2-3.

<sup>79</sup> “Yat kiñcidiha loke vai dehasattvaṁ viśāmpate/

Sarvaṁ pañcavirāviṣṭaṁ bhūtairīśvarabuddhijaiḥ//

Īśvaro hi jagatsraṣṭā prabhurnārāyaṇo virāt/

Bhūtāntarātmā varadaḥ sguṇo nirguṇo’pi ca/

Bhūtapralayamatyantam śṛṇuṣva nṛpasattama//”*ibid.*, 12.335.10-11.

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are created by Nara-Nārāyaṇa, the first to exist. The waters were his original abode, ‘*ayana*’, so he is mentioned as Nārāyaṇa.<sup>80</sup>

At the outset of the *kalpa*, as he pondered over creation and there came out creation which was devoid of intellect and was filled with darkness. According to *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* : ‘*Nārāyaṇam Devaṃ adevaṃ īśaṃ*’.<sup>81</sup> The notion of the Virāṭ Puruṣa is evidently a development of the idea in seed form, in Puruṣa sūkta of *ṚV*. The Virāṭa Puruṣa is otherwise called Nārāyaṇa in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*.<sup>82</sup> At the end of previous *kalpa*, Nārāyaṇa, the Virāṭa Puruṣa with thousand heads, thousands eyes, thousand feet etc slept on the water created by Himself. Hence He is proclaimed as such by the Vedas. In the primeval waters, the entire universe comprising of movables and immovable’s were destroyed—“*Ekārṇave tadā tasminnaṣṭe sthāvarajaṅgame.*”

The Virāṭa Puruṣa Nārāyaṇa with *nirguṇa* or devoid of attributes before creation, has become *saguṇa* or assumed the many qualities of Māyā. In the Bhāratakaumudī commentary interprets the word ‘*saguṇa* and *nirguṇa*’ as ‘*sākāratve saguṇaḥ satvādiguṇavān, nirākāra-cinmayatve ca nirguṇa sattvādiguṇasūnyaḥ.*’ It implies that it is a wish of Īśvara to sustain, destroy and recreate self manifestation.

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<sup>80</sup> “Āpo nārā iti proktā āpo vai naraśūnavaḥ/

Tā yadasyāyaṇaṃ tasya pūrvam tena nārāyaṇaḥ smṛtaḥ//”*Manu*, I.10.

<sup>81</sup> *BhP*, 12.12.56.

<sup>82</sup> *BhP*, 1.18; 2.1.

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### 3.II. Concept of Saguṇa Brahma:

The term *saguṇa* means ‘with attributes’, which implies that god has a name and form and attributes. It is said that Brahman is endowed with infinite super qualities like omniscience, omnipotence etc. It is also said that it creates, sustains, and dissolves the world. For example,

“Eṣa sarveśvaraḥ eṣa sarvajñaḥ, eso’ntaryāmī eṣa yomn sarvasya prabhavāpyayau hi bhūtānām//”<sup>83</sup>

The Lord of all, the knower of all, the inner controller, the origin of all, is the inception and the end of all beings. The *Brahmasutra* states that the Brahman is that from where this world originates: “*janmādyasya yataḥ*” etc.<sup>84</sup> The similar idea has been expressed in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* where Brahman is described as ‘*Tajjālan*’.<sup>85</sup> The full description of Brahman as the creator, sustainers and destroyer of this world is given in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*.<sup>86</sup> Lord Kṛṣṇa speaks about *saguṇa* god in the *Śrīmadbhagavatgītā*— “Whenever righteousness is on the decline and unrighteousness is on the increase, I appear in the material world. From age to age I come into being to protect the good, destroy the bad and consolidate righteousness.”<sup>87</sup> The

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<sup>83</sup> *ManU*, 6.

<sup>84</sup> *BS*, I.1.2.

<sup>85</sup> “Sarvaṃ khalvidaṃ brahma tajjalāniti śānta upāsīta/ Atha khalu kratumayaḥ puruṣo yathākraturasmilloke puruṣo bhavati, tathetaḥ pretya bhavati; sa kratuṃ kurvvīta//”

“Manomayaḥ prāṇasrīro bhārūpaḥ satyasaṅkalpa ākāśātmā sarvvakarmā sarvvakāmaḥ sarvvagandhaḥ sarvvarasaḥ sarvvamidamabhyātto’vākyanādarah//” *ChāU*, III.14.1-2.

<sup>86</sup> *TaiU*, III.1.1.

<sup>87</sup> “Yadā Yadā hi dharmasya glānirbhavati bhārata/

Abhyutthānamadharmaḥ tadātmānam sṛjāmyaham//” *Bhā Gītā*, 4.7.

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concept of *avatāratva* emanates here from. *Avatāras* appear in this world in different ages to preserve the universe.

### 3.III. Concept of Nirguṇa Brahma:

Nirguṇa means ‘without attributes’ which means that god as the absolute spirit and pure consciousness has neither attributes nor name nor form. Nirguṇa is untainted energy, the living and conscious prowess that is active in the universe. Actually, the supreme self, is *nirguṇa* Brahman. He is the witness, the animator, the absolute and free from all qualities.<sup>88</sup> *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* mention in this context that it is not gross or fine, not short or long, not glowing or soothing, neither shadow nor darkness, not air or space, unshaped, without the sense of taste, smell, vision hearing and speech. It is the one which is same inside and outside, without mind, radiance, breath and measure.<sup>89</sup> The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* says, “*Niṣkalaṃ niskriyaṃ śāntaṃ niravadyaṃ nirañjanaṃ*” etc. that is without actions, tranquil, blameless, unattached etc.

The two aspects *nirguṇa* and *saguṇa* are also spoken of as transcendent Brahman and immanent Brahman. The first manifestation of *saguṇa* Brahman is *Īśvara*. Some of the names of *saguṇa* Brahman are *Hiraṇyagarbha*, *Virāṭ*, *Sutrātman*, and *Prāna*. All these names denote the Cosmic Self, the Cosmic Mind, or the Cosmic Person. While interpreting the

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<sup>88</sup> *SvtU*, 6.11.

<sup>89</sup> “*asthulaṃ, ananu ahrasvaṃ, adirghaṃ, alohitaṃ, asnehaṃ, acchāyaṃ, atamaḥ, avāyu anakāśaṃ, ascungaṃ, arasaṃ, agandhaṃ, acakṣuṣaṃ, asrotraṃ, avāk, amanaḥ, atejaskaṃ, aprāṇaṃ, amukhaṃ, amātraṃ, anantaraṃ, abāhyaṃ* etc.” *BṛhU*, III.8.8.

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*Nāsadīya Sūkta*, Sāyanācārya, the great Vedic commentator, teaches that Īśvara is the efficient as well as the material cause of the universe.

#### 3.IV. Cosmological ideas reflected in the mythology of Hayaśira Viṣṇu:

Before entering into the discussion of the prime myth of Hayaśira Viṣṇu, we need to go through the cosmological ideas or the description of the innumerable creation and also great dissolution mentioned.

From the primitive time men were eager to know about the origin of the universe. The perennial questions as to how, when and why the universe came into existence have excited human minds from times immemorial. In the ancient cultures like the Greek, Egyptian, Iranian, Indian etc. people were passionate about different theories on creation or cosmogony. They introduced different cosmological explanations that were sometimes mythological and sometimes much scientific. Since cosmogony is concerned mostly with this Universe it is a very important topic of discussion for the scientists also.

The theory of creation of the universe continues in the Vedic and post-vedic literature. Hence here in the *Mahābhārata* with the context of Hayaśira myth, Vaiśampāyaṇa narrates about it:

“Dharaṇyāmatha līnāyāmapsu caikārṇve purā/  
Jyotirbhūte jale cāpi līne jyotiṣi cānile//  
Vāyau cākāśasaṃlāne ākāśe ca mano’anuge/  
Vykte manasi saṃlīne vykte cā vyktatām gate//  
Avykte puruṣaṃ yāte puṃsi sarvvagate’api ca/

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Tama evābhavat sarvaṃ na prājñāyata kiñcana//”<sup>90</sup>

At the beginning, the element of Earth was immersed in water and nothing was visible except the vast expanded waters. Water then merged into heat, heat into wind, wind into space, and space merged with mind. Mind merged into the Manifestation or Ego, Manifest merged into the unmanifest Prakṛti that merges into Puruṣa or Jivātman that finally merged with the Supreme Brahman. Then Darkness spread across the universe, and nothing could be seen. The transformation took place in the following order: Apaḥ (Water)> Agni (Heat)> Vāyu (Wind)> Space> Manas (Mind)> Prakṛti> Puruṣa or Pradhāna. This configuration of cosmological theory reminds us about the theory of creation advocated by the Sāṅkhya school of Indian Philosophy.

From that primeval Darkness emerged Brahman and assumed the form of Puruṣa developed by its own potency into the idea of the universe. Such Puruṣa known as Aniruddha, is recognized otherwise by the name of Pradhāna. Pradhāna is also identified as Manifest, or the combination of the threefold attribute:

“Tamaso brahma saṃbhūtaṃ tamo mūlāmṛtātmakam/  
Tadviśvabhāvasañjñāntaṃ pauruṣī tanumāśritaṃ//  
So’niruddha iti proktastat pradhānaṃ pracakṣate/  
Tadavyktaṃ iti jñeyaṃ triguṇaṃ nṛpasattama//”<sup>91</sup>

According to the Vedas, the cosmology has been described in the four *sūktas* of the *Ṛgveda* viz. *Puruṣasūkta*,<sup>92</sup> *Hiraṇyagarbhasūkta*,<sup>93</sup> *Nāsadīyasūkta*<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> *MBh*, 12.335.12-14.

<sup>91</sup> *MBh*, 12.335.15-16.

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and *Śṛṣṭisūkta*<sup>95</sup>. In these four *sūktas* the science of creation has been narrated in detail. The other Vedas too propagate such theories. The *Nāsadīya sūkta* of the *Ṛgveda* includes a number of cosmological thought, one of which questions the origin of the cosmos.<sup>96</sup> At the end of a cycle of the universe everything becomes finer and is resolved back into the primal undifferentiated state from where it emerged. This state has been described in this *sūkta* as ‘*ānīda vātaṃ*,’ ‘it vibrated without vibration’.

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<sup>92</sup> *RV*, 10.90.5.

<sup>93</sup> “Hiraṇyagarbhaḥ samavaratāgre bhūtasyajātaḥ patireka āsīt/  
Sadādhāra pṛthivīm dyāmutemām kasmai devāya haviṣā vidhema//” *ibid.*, 10.121.1.

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*, 10.129.

<sup>95</sup> “Sūryacandramasaudhātā yathāpūrvamakalpate/  
Divam ca pṛthivīm cām tarikṣamathā svaḥ//” *ibid.*, 10.190.3.

<sup>96</sup> “Nāsaadāsīno sadāsīttadānīm nāsīdrajo no vyom paro yat/  
Kimāvarīvaḥ kuha kasya śarmannambhaḥ kimāsīdgahanaṃ gabhīraṃ//  
Na mṛtyurāsīdamṛtaṃ na tarhi na rātryā ahna āsītpraketaḥ/  
Ānīdavātaṃ svadhayā tadekaṃ tasmāddhānyanna paraḥ kiñcanāśaa//  
Tama āsīt tamasā gūlhamagre praketaṃ salilaṃ sarvā’ idaṃ/  
Tucchyenābhvapihitaṃ yadāsīttapasastanmahinā jāyataikaṃ//  
Kāmastadagre samavartatādhi manaso retaḥ prathamam yadāsīt/  
Sato bandhu masati niravindanhr̥di pratīṣyā kavayo manīṣā//  
Tiraścīno vitato rāsmireṣāmadhaḥ svidāsīdupari svidāsīt/  
Retodhā āsanmahimāna āsantsvadhā avastātprayatiḥ parastāt//  
Ko addhā veda ka iha pra vocatkuta ajātā kuta iyaṃ viśṛṣṭiḥ/  
Arvāgdevā asya visarjanenāthā ko veda yata ābabhūva//  
Iyaṃ viśṛṣṭiryata ābabhūva yadi vā dadhe yadi vā na/  
Yo asyādhyakṣaḥ parame vyomantso aṅga veda yadi vā na veda//” *ibid.*, 10.129.1-7.

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The *Puruṣa sūkta* of the *R̥gveda* gives a description of the universe. It presents the nature of Puruṣa or the cosmic being as both immanent in the manifested world and yet transcending it. The Puruṣa is defined in verses 2 to 5 of the *sūkta*.<sup>97</sup> Puruṣa is described as a being that encompasses everything conscious and unconscious universally.

Moreover, in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, there is a description of the creation from Puruṣa, who desired and at once his manifestation or creation started.<sup>98</sup> *apah* (water) and *agni* (fire) gave birth to the golden Egg, which got converted in the form of Puruṣa, who is Prajāpati.<sup>99</sup>

The history of cosmogony or creation is portrayed in several *Upaniṣads* also. In the *Aitareya Upaniṣad*<sup>100</sup> and the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*<sup>101</sup> the account of

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<sup>97</sup> “Puruṣa evedaṃ sarvaṃ yadbhūtaṃ yacca bhavya/  
Utāmṛtatvasyeśāno yadannenātirohati//  
Etāvānasya mahimāto jyāyāṃśca puruṣaḥ/  
Pādo’sya viśvā bhūtāni tripādasyāmṛtaṃ divi//  
Tripādūrdhv udait puruṣḥ pādo’syehābhavat punaḥ/  
Tato viṣvaṇvykrāmat sāśanānaśane abhi//  
Tasmādvirā’jāyata virājo’dhi puruṣaḥ/  
Sajāto’tyaricyata paścādbhūmi mathopuraḥ//” *ibid.*, 10.90.2-5.

<sup>98</sup> “Yo’yaṃ puruṣa prajāpatirkāmayat brahmaiva prathama sṛjat tryīmeva vidhema//” *ŚB*, 6.1.1.8.

<sup>99</sup> “Āpoḥ vā idamagre salilamevāsa/ tat kāmayanta/ kayamanuprajāyemahi iti/ tasu tapasta mānāsu hiraṇyamantamasambubhava//” *ŚB*, 11.1.6.1.

<sup>100</sup> “Auṃ Ātmā vā idameka evāgra āsīt/ nānyat kiñcanamiṣat/ sa īkṣata lokāntu sṛjā iti//” *AitU*, 1.1.1.

<sup>101</sup> “Asadvā idamagraāsīt/ tatau ve sadajāyata/ tadātmānaṃ svayaṃ kuruta/ tasmāttatsukṛtamucyate iti//” *TaiU*, 2.7.1.

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creation of this universe and the world is described. The concept of god as supreme power and the creator is more explicit. The whole activity regarding creation revolving round a supreme power must identify the divinity. The creation, whether by a divine power, or by time, or by nature, or by the rules of law, have to be followed for the same. *Bṛhadāraṇyak Upaniṣad* says that in the beginning there was nothing whatsoever in the Universe. By Hiranyagarbha, indeed, all this was covered by hunger.<sup>102</sup> *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* states that “In the beginning, this universe was *sat* alone, one only without a second.” Others say that in the beginning *asat* was alone, only one without a second; and from that being was born.<sup>103</sup>

‘*Sat*’ and ‘*asat*’ in the *Nāsadīya Sūkta* of the *Ṛgveda* is similar to the *vyakta-avyakta* reflected in Sāṃkhya. The hymns about Puruṣa had also influenced Sāṃkhya.<sup>104</sup> The Sāṃkhya concept of *buddhi* or *mahat* denotes the Hiranyagarbha, as appears in the *Ṛgveda* and also the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*.<sup>105</sup>

According to Sāṃkhya philosophy, the interaction of two independent concepts Puruṣa or soul and Prakṛti or nature, produce matter and the worlds.

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<sup>102</sup> “Naiveha kiñcanāgra āsīt mṛtyunaivedamāvṛtamāsīdaśanāyayā, āśanāyā hi mṛtyustanmano’kurutātmanvī syāmiti/ so’rchannacharat tasyārccata apo’jāyantārchate vai me kamabhūditi tadevārkasyārkatvaṃ kaṃ ha vā asmai bhavati, ya evametadarkasyārkatvaṃ veda//” *BṛU*, 1.2.1.

<sup>103</sup> “Sadeva somya edamagra āsīdekanevādvitīyaṃ / taddhaika āhurasadevedamagra āsīdekamevādvitīyaṃ tasmādasataḥ sajjāyata//” *ChU*, 6.2.1.

<sup>104</sup> Larson, Gerald James: *Classical Sāṃkhya: An Interpretation of Its History and Meaning*, pp.59,79-81.

<sup>105</sup> Larson, Gerald James: *ibid.*, p.82.

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Puruṣa is described as omniscient, omnipresent and indivisible entity. Prakṛti or nature which is always active intermingles with Puruṣa to produce worlds. The Prakṛti comprises of three elements—*tamas* (darkness), *rajas* (active) and *sattva* (goodness). The equipoise of the Prakṛti is disturbed by the Puruṣa. Puruṣa quits the equilibrium, and intellect or *buddhi* is born. *ahaṃkāra* is born from *buddhi*, *manas* or mind emerges from ego and this formed the basic creative cycle of *kalpa* in Sāṃkhya concept.

The theory of creation or cosmology is also available in the first chapter of *Manusmṛti*. Here it is said that before creation “the universe existed in the form of darkness, unperceived, destitute of distinctive marks, unattainable by reasoning, unknowable, wholly immersed as it were, in deep sleep. Then the divine self existent, *Svayambhu* himself, imperceptible .... the great elements and the rests, discernible, appeared with creative power, dispelling the darkness .... he desiring to produce beings of many kinds from his own body, first .... created the waters and placed his seed in them. That became a golden egg, he himself was born as Brahman, the progenitor of the whole world.”<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> “Āsīd idaṃ tamobhūtaṃ aprajñātaṃ alakṣaṇaṃ/  
Apratarkyaṃ avijñeyaṃ prasuptaṃ iva sarvataḥ//  
Tataḥ svayaṃbhūr bhagavān abyakto vyñjayanna idaṃ/  
Mahābhūtādi vṛtta ojaḥ prādurāsīd tamonudaḥ//  
Yo asāv atīndriyagrāgrāhya avyaktaḥ sanātanaḥ/  
Sarvabhūtamayo acintyaḥ sa eva svayaṃ udvabhau//  
Yoabhidhyāya śrīrāt svāt sisṛkṣur vividhāḥ prajāḥ/  
Apa eva sasarja adau tāsū vīryaṃ avāsrjat//  
Tad aṇḍaṃ abhavadda haimaṃ sahasrāṃśusamaprabhaṃ/  
Tasmiñc jajñe svayaṃ brahmā sarvaloka pitāmahaḥ//  
Āpo narā iti proktā āpo vai naraśūnavah/

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Here we see a much more comprehensive and elaborate discussion regarding creation related to its parallel verses in the Vedas.

### 3.V. Birth of Brahmā:

Meanwhile, at the time of great dissolution *vidyāsahāyavān devo viṣvakṣeno hariḥ*, Lord Hari thought about the creation of the universe of diversified phenomena fraught with immeasurable attributes.<sup>107</sup> A primeval lotus grew up from the navel of Mahāviṣṇu and Brahmā was born out of this flower—

“Vidyāsahāyavāndevo viṣvakṣeno hariḥ prabhuḥ/  
Apsveva śayanaṃ cakre nidrāyogamupāgataḥ//<sup>108</sup>  
Jagataścintayan sṛṣṭiṃ citrāṃ vahugūṇodbhavāṃ/  
Tasya cintayataḥ sṛṣṭiṃ mahānātmaguṇaḥ smṛtaḥ/  
Ahaṅkārastato jāto brahmā sat u caturmukhaḥ/  
Hiraṇyagarbho bhagavān sarvolokapitāmahaḥ//”<sup>109</sup>

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Tā yad asyāyanaṃ pūrva tena nārāyaṇaḥ smṛtaḥ//  
Yat tat kāraṇaṃ avyaktaṃ nityaṃ sad asad atmakaṃ/  
Tad viśṛṣṭaḥ sa puruṣo loka brahmā i krīyate//”MS,1.5-11.

<sup>107</sup> Nārāyaṇa who is also called as Hari thinks of the Creation of the Universe of diversified phenomena. It reminds us of the Vedic dictum “*sa aikṣat bahusyām prajāyeyaeti...*” (CU, 6.2.3). *śānti parva* of MBh refers that from lord Nārāyaṇa’s thinking of creation, *Ahaṅkāra* appeared and thereof sprung *caturmukha* Brahmā, the consciousness of Aniruddha ‘*Padme*’ *aniruddhāt sambhūta*stadā...’ (MBh,12.335.19) also called Hiraṇyagarbha. Thereafter the parameṣṭhi Brahmā creates the universe— “*sattvasthaḥ parameṣṭhī sa tato bhūtagaṇan sṛjan.*” (MBh,12.335.20).

<sup>108</sup> Commentator states that “Vidyāsahāyavān jñānavān, devo dyotamānaḥ, viṣvak samantāt senā śaktiryasya saḥ, prabhuḥ prabhāvavān, harir nārāyaṇaḥ, apsu kāraṇasalila eva śayanaṃ cakre śyita iva niṣkriya āsīt, nidrāyogaṃ yoganidrāmupāgataḥ san//”

<sup>109</sup> MBh,12.335.17-18.

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The illustrious Brahmā, otherwise called *Hiraṇyagarbha*, is the Grandsire of all the worlds. Epic poet identified Puruṣa with Prakṛti<sup>110</sup>, *Hiraṇyagarbha* with *buddhi* and Brahmā with *ahaṃkāra*.

### 3.VI. Birth of Madhu-Kaiṭabha:

At that time the qualities *tamas* and *rajas* were born personified as Madhu and Kaiṭabha respectively, according to the desire of the Lord Nārāyaṇa. With the effulgence of the Sun in the primeval lotus, two drops of water were created by Nārāyaṇa. Of the two drops of water one was very beautiful and bright like honey, and the other was very firm. At the command of Nārāyaṇa, demon Madhu was born from the honey like drop with the attributes of *tamas* or darkness. The demon Kaiṭabha was born from the other drop of water having the attribute of *rajas*:

“Pūrvameva ca padmasya patre sūryāṃśusaprabhe/  
Nārāyaṇakṛtau vindu apāmāstāṃ guṇottarau//  
Tāvapasyat sa bhagavānanādinidhano’cyutaḥ/  
Ekastatrābhavadvindurmmadhvabho ruciraprabhaḥ//  
Sa tāmaso madhurjjātastadā nārāyaṇājñayā/  
Kaṭhinastvaparo vinduḥ kaiṭabho rājasastu saḥ//”<sup>111</sup>

Madhu and Kaiṭabha, are the demons associated with cosmic myth of Hayaśira Viṣṇu. Immediately after their birth, they found Brahmā engaged in

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<sup>110</sup> “*Trigunātmikā Prakṛti*” i.e., prakṛti consists of three elements or guṇas—*tamas* or darkness, *rajas* or activity, and *sattva* or goodness. Vācaspatimiśra says,

“Prakaroti iti prakṛti pradhānam/ Sattvarajastamasāṃ sāmyāvasthā //”

<sup>111</sup> *MBh*, 12.335.21-23.

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creating the four Vedas in a delightful mood. The envious *daityas* suddenly stole the Vedas from Brahmā and quickly took them away to the nether region, *rasātala*.<sup>112</sup> Brahmā was filled with grief.<sup>113</sup> Having lost the Vedas, he felt that he had lost his sight and he started praying Nārāyaṇa to bring back the stolen Vedas.<sup>114</sup> Brahmā said that—

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<sup>112</sup> *Rasātala* is the bottom end of the earth covered by Lord Viṣṇu's one of the three feet and is the abode of the *dānavas* and *daityas*, who are mighty but cruel. They are the eternal foes of *devas*. They live in holes like serpents. *Mani. Vettam: Puranic Encyclopaedia: A Comprehensive Dictionary with Special Reference to the Epic and Puranic Literature*, pp. 580–581. In Sanskrit cosmology, the universe is divided into the three worlds— *svarga*, *pṛthivī* and *pātāla* or the netherworld. *Rasātala* is often translated as underworld or netherworld and it is a realm of *pātāla*. The *Viṣṇupurāṇa* states the seven realms of *pātāla*, which are located one above the other, below the earth's surface. In this *purāṇa*, they are named as from the highest to the lowest as: Atala, Vitala, Nitala, Garbhastimat, Mahātala, Sutala and Pātāla. In the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* and the *Padmapurāṇa*, they are called *atala*, *vitala*, *sutala*, *talātala*, *mahātala*, *rasātala* and *pātāla*. The *Vāyupurāṇa* calls them *rasātala*, *sutala*, *vitala*, *gabhastala*, *mahātala*, *srītala* and *pātāla*.

<sup>113</sup> “Dadṛśāte’aravindasthaṃ brahmāṇamamitaprbhaṃ/  
Sṛjantaṃ prathamam vedāṃścaturaścāruvighrahān//  
Tato vighrahavanta tau vedān dṛṣṭvāsurottamau/  
Sahasā jaghaturvedān brahmaṇaḥ paśyatastadā//  
Atha tau dānavaśreṣṭhau vedān grhya sanātanaṃ/  
Rasāṃ vivīśatusturṇamudakpūrve mahodadhau//” *MBh*, 12.335.25-27.

<sup>114</sup> “Vedā me paramaṃ cakṣurvvedā me paramaṃ valaṃ/  
Vedā me paramaṃ dhāma vedā me brahmacottaraṃ//  
Mama vedā hṛtaḥ sarve dānavābhāṃ balāditaḥ/  
Andhakārā hi me lokā jātā vedairvvinākṛtāḥ/  
Vedānrte hi kiṃ kuryyāṃ lokānāṃ sṛṣṭimuttamāṃ//  
Aho vata mahad duḥkhaṃ vedanāśanaṃ mama/

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“The Vedas are my great eyes. The Vedas are my great strength. The Vedas are my great shelter. The Vedas are my high Brahman. All the Vedas, however, have been forcibly taken away from me by the two *dānavas*. Without the Vedas, the worlds have become enveloped in darkness to me. Devoid of the Vedas, how shall I succeed in excellent creation too? Alas, I suffer in such a major grief consequence of loss of the Vedas. My heart is very much pained. It has turn into the abode of a great sorrow. In this stage of crisis who will rescue me from this ocean of grief in which I am sunk? Who will bring me the lost Vedas? Who is there that will take compassion on me?”<sup>115</sup>

The word Veda is originated from the root ‘*vid*’<sup>116</sup>, and primarily means sacred knowledge or wisdom. The Veda means to know. According to Pāṇinī, the word Veda comes from five verbs.<sup>117</sup> Maharṣi Dayānanda

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Prāptaṃ dunoti hṛdayaṃ tīvraṃ śokaparāyaṇaṃ//  
Ko hi śokārṇave magnaṃ māmīto’adya samuddharet/  
Vedāṃstāṃścānayaennaṣṭān kasya cāhaṃ priyo bhave//  
Ityevaṃ bhāṣamāṇasya brahmaṇo nṛpasattama/  
Harestotrārthamudbhūtā buddhirbuddhimatāmvara/  
Tato jagau paraṃ japyam prāñjalipragrahaḥ prabhuḥ//”*MBh*, 12.335.29-33.

<sup>115</sup> Roy, P.C: *The Mahabharata*, p.604.

<sup>116</sup> Apte, V.S: *Sanskrit English Dictionary*, p.337.

<sup>117</sup> *Vid*: *jñāne* - to know; *vid*: *sattāyām* - to be; *vid*: *lābhe* - to obtain; *vid*: *vicāraṇe* - to consider; *vid*: *cetanākhyānanivāseṣu*- to feel, to tell, to dwell. According to Pāṇinī, (III.3.19,) the suffix ‘*ghañ*’ is added to each of these roots in the sense of instrument or location. Accordingly it means, of which or in which all persons know, acquire mastery in, deliberate over the various lores or live or subject upon them.

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Sarasvatī derives it from four roots.<sup>118</sup> A.A. Macdonell provides only two roots instead of five like, ‘*vid*’ – ‘to know’ and ‘*vid*’ – ‘to obtain’ in his Vedic grammar.<sup>119</sup> Some traditional scholars also explain the word ‘Veda’ based upon these derivations.<sup>120</sup> The word Veda or its root ‘*vid*’ has often been found in almost every language of the Indo-European family. Maxmular says that “If the word Veda is related to wisdom or vision, it would mean *darśana*. The word *Ṛgveda* is also sometimes derived from the root *drś* to see.”<sup>121</sup>

Vedas are also known in various names in the later Vedic literature such as, ‘*śruti*’,<sup>122</sup> ‘*āmnāya*’, ‘*trayī*’, ‘*nigama*’ etc. It contains everything in it. Hence Manu says—

“Vedo’khilo dharmamūlaṃ/  
Sarva jñānamayo hi saḥ  
Sarvaṃ vedāt prasidhyati//”<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Vid: *jñāne* - ‘to know’ (Adādi, seṭ, Parasmaipada) – *vetti*; *vid*: *sattāvāṃ* - ‘to exist’ (Divādi, Anīṭ) – *vidvate*; *vid*: *vicāraṇe* – ‘to discriminate’ (Rudhādi, Anīṭ)– *vinte*; *vid*: *lābhe*– ‘to obtain or acquire’ (Tudādi, Seṭ)– *vindati* or *vindate*. *Ṛgvedadi-bhāṣya-bhūmikā*, Saṅkhyā, chapter.2.

<sup>119</sup> Macdonell, A.A. A Vedic grammar for students. Appendix I, p. 418.

<sup>120</sup> “Pratyakṣenānumityā vā yastupāyo na budhvate /

Enaṃ vidanti vedena tasmād vedasya vedatā //” *ṚV Bhāṣya*. Introduction of Sāyaṇa, Hindi trans. by Virendra Varma, p.105.

“Iṣṭaprāptyaṇiṣṭaparihārayoralaukikamupāyaṃ yo vedayati sa vedaḥ//” Sāyaṇa’s remark in his introduction to Taittirīya Saṃhitā Bhāṣya.

<sup>121</sup> Dharmadhikari, T. N: *Vedas- A Broad Perspective, Saṃvijñānam*, Felicitation Volume of Dr. T. N. Dharmadhikari. (2006). p.106.

<sup>122</sup> The word *śruti* derived from the root *śru-śravaṇe* - to hear. So *śruti* means, which is learned by an oral transmission.

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The division of the Vedas is fourfold viz. *Ṛgveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Sāmaveda*, and *Atharvaveda*. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyak Upaniṣad* it is stated that, “Etasya vā mahato bhūtasya niḥśvasitametaḥ yad ṛgvedo yajurvedaḥ sāmavedo’tharvavedaḥ”<sup>124</sup> The *Ṛgveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Sāmaveda* and *Atharvaveda* are out pouring or Breath of the Supreme Being. *MBh* also sings the glory of the Veda—

“Anādinidhanānityā, vāgutsṛṭā svayaṃbhutvā/  
Ādau vedamayī divyā, yataḥ sarvā pravṛttayaḥ//”<sup>125</sup>

At the time of origin of this universe, self-existent god revealed the eternal Vedas as the source of all human activities. When the eternal, unperceivable, all pervading, all-comprehensive, exceedingly subtle, un-decaying, supreme knowledge and wisdom Vedas were stolen by the demons Madhu-Kaiṭabha and quickly took them away to the nether region, *rasātala*.

Crisis and its prevention were generated simultaneously, for the creatures and also for the creation. History shows that whenever there is a crisis, strength also emerges to solve the crisis. When Madhu-Kaiṭabha, the two demons, forcibly robbed the Vedas from Brahmā and quickly took them away to the nether region, Brahmā started praying to his progenitor Nārāyaṇa to prevent the situation. Brahmā prayed with hymns to bring back the stolen Vedas, the sacred knowledge, without which successful creation

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<sup>123</sup> *ManuS*, 2.6.

<sup>124</sup> *BṛU*, 4.5.11.

<sup>125</sup> *MBh*, 12.232.24.

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was impossible.<sup>126</sup> Subsequently Nārāyaṇa woke up from his yoga slumber. He decided to regain the Vedas and assumed a new form of Hayaśirah:

“Evaṃ stutaḥ sa bhagavān puruṣaḥ sarvatomukhaḥ/  
Jahau nidrāmatha tadā vedakāryyārthamudyataḥ//  
Aiśvareṇa prayogeṇa dvitīyaṃ tanumāsthitaḥ/  
Sunāsikena kāyena bhūtvā candraprabhastadā//  
Kṛtvā Hayaśirah śubhraṃ vedānāmālayaṃ prabhuḥ/  
Tasya mūrddhā samabhavaddyauḥ sanakṣatratārakā//  
Keśāścāsyābhavaddīrghā raveramśusamaprabhaḥ/  
Karṇāvākāśapātāle lalāṭaṃ bhūtadhāriṇī//  
Gaṅgā sarasvatī puṇyā bhruvāvāstāṃ mahānadī/

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<sup>126</sup> “Om Namaste brahmahṛdaya! Namaste mama pūrvaja!/  
Lokādya! bhuvanaśreṣṭha! sāmkyayoganidhe vibho!//  
Vykṭāvyktakarācintya! kṣemaṃ panthānamāsthita!/  
Viśvabhuk sarvvabhūtānāmantarātmannayonija!//  
Ahaṃ prasādajastubhyaṃ lokadhāmne svayambhuve/  
Tvatto me mānasaṃ janma prathamam dvijapūjitaṃ//  
Cākṣuṣaṃ vai dvitīyaṃ me janma cāsīt purātaṇaṃ/  
Tvatprasādacca me janma tṛtīyaṃ vācikaṃ mahat//  
Tvttaḥ śravaṇajañcāpicaturthaṃ janma ma vibho!/  
Nāsikyaṃ cāpi me janma tvattaḥ pañcamamucyate//  
Aṇḍajañcāpi me janma tvattaḥ ṣaṣṭhaṃ vinirmmitaṃ/  
Idaṇca saptamaṃ janma padmajaṃ me’mitoprabha//  
Sarge sarge hyahaṃ putrastava triguṇavarjjitaḥ!/  
Prathitaḥ puṇḍarīkākṣaḥ pradhānaguṇakalpitaḥ//  
Tvamiśvarasvabhāvaśca svayambhuvaḥ puruṣottamaḥ /  
Tvayā vinirmmito’haṃ vai vedacakṣurvayo’tigaḥ//  
Te me vedā hṛtāścakṣurandho jāto’smi jāgrhi/  
Dadasva cakṣuṃśi mahyaṃ priyo’haṃ te priyo’si me//” *MBh*, 12.335.34-42.

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Cakṣuṣī somasūryyau te nāsā sandhyā punaḥ smṛtā//  
Om̐kārstvatha saṃskāro vidyujjihvā ca nirmmitā/  
Dantāśca pitaro rājan! Somapā iti viśrutāḥ//  
Goloko brahmalokaśca oṣṭhāvāstām mahātmanāḥ/  
Grīvā cāsyābhavadrājan! kālarātrirguṇottarā//  
Etaddhayaśiraḥ kṛtvā nānāmūrttibhirāvṛttam/  
Antardadhe sa viśveśo viveśa ca rasām prabhuḥ//”<sup>127</sup>

The Lord furnished his body with a superb nose, became as brilliant as the moon. His head assumed the form of a horse’s head with great lustre, the abode of the Vedas. The entire cosmos, with all luminaries and galaxy, became his crown. His tresses were long and graceful with the magnificence of the rays of the sun. The heaven and nether land became his two ears and earth became his forehead. His two hips were the rivers Gangā and Sarasvatī, his two eye-brows were the two oceans. The sun and the moon formed his two eyes. The twilight was his nose. The syllable ‘*Om*’ as his memory and intelligence and lightning became his tongue. The *Pitṛ*’s drinking *soma* were his teeth. *Goloka* and *Brahmaloka*, became his upper and lower lips. His neck could be equated to the terrible night preceding universal destruction that transcends the three attributes. His limbs represented diverse things. This Lord of universe left at once and move forward to the nether worlds.”<sup>128</sup> The concept of the Virāṭ puruṣa emancipates the beautiful illustration of the Hayaśira Viṣṇu that manifests the entire universe.

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<sup>127</sup> *MBh*, 12.335.83-89.

<sup>128</sup> Roy. P.C: *Op. cit.* p.605.

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Lord Nārāyaṇa having assumed this Hayaśīraḥ form entered into the nether region and began to recite the Vedic hymns in a melodious voice—

“Rasāṃ punaḥ praviṣṭaśca yogaṃ paramamāsthitaḥ/  
Śaikṣaṃ svaram samāsthāya omīti prāsrjat svaram//”<sup>129</sup>

Adopting a voice controlled by the rules of science of *śikṣā*, he began to spell aloud the Vedic mantras. His pronunciation was explicit and resonant through the air, and was canorous in every aspect.<sup>130</sup>

In some, the word ‘*udgīthaṃ*’ is used instead of ‘*Om*’. The commentator says that—

“Sa viśveśaḥ rasāṃ rasātalaṃ praviṣṭaḥ punaḥ paramaṃ  
yogamāsthitaścāsan, śaikṣaṃ śikṣāsamvandhināṃ śikṣāśāstroktam  
svaramudāttādikam samāsthāya abalamvya, udgīthaṃ gānātmakam  
svaram prāsrjat//”<sup>131</sup>

It the previous parva of the *Mahābhārata*, Nārada described the nether world or *pātāla* as the world of snakes where during auspicious occasions, Hayaśīraḥ with golden complexion is evoked as ‘*suvarṇābha*’, and the world becomes filled with waters and Vedic hymns.<sup>132</sup> Here it is to be noted that the term ‘*udgīthaṃ*’ referred to as the act of *udgāna* or the part of *sāma*, described as the sacred syllable ‘*Om*’ in connection with Hayagrīva as the

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<sup>129</sup> *MBh*, 12.335.50.

<sup>130</sup> *ibid.*, p.605.

<sup>131</sup> Bāratakaumudī, commentary of Siddhāntavāgīśa, *MBh*, p.3732.

<sup>132</sup> *MBh*, 5.97.5.

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supreme lord of knowledge and wisdom is reflected in the *Hayagrīvopaniṣad*.

The word *udgītha* literally means a song sung (from the root *gai*) highly (*ut*) or an exalted song. *Sāma* has five parts, viz., *hīnkāra*, *prastāva*, *udgītha*, *pratihāra*, *nidhāna*; and this is the most significant, high pitched middle portion of the chant known as *udgītha*—

“Lokeṣu pañcavidha sāmopāsīta, pṛthivī hīnkāraḥ/ Agniḥ prastāva  
antarīkṣaṃ udgītha ādityaḥ pratihāro dyaurnidhanamityūrdhveṣu//”<sup>133</sup>

The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* uses this word to indicate the sacred syllable ‘Om’—

“Omityetadaḥṣaramudgīthamupāsīta/  
Omiti hyudgāyati, tasyopavyākhyānaṃ//”<sup>134</sup>

Here the word *udgītha* neither denotes the act of *udgāna* nor the part of *sāma* known as such, but it signifies the *udgātṛ* himself. In this context of *udgītha* *Bṛhadāraṇyak Upaniṣad* says that—

“Dvayā ha prajātyā devāścāsurāśca, tataḥ kānīyasā eva devā jyāyasā  
asurāḥ, ta eṣu lokeṣvasparddhanta, te ha devā ūcurhantāsurān yajña  
udgīthenātyayāmeti//”<sup>135</sup>

Śaṅkara points it out in his commentary that ‘*udgīthena*’ (by *udgītha*) it is explicit that by the accomplishment of the self of the agent of the *udgītha*-

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<sup>133</sup> *CU*, 2.2.1.

<sup>134</sup> *ibid.*, 1.1.1.

<sup>135</sup> *BU*, 1.3.1.

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act’ (*udgītha-karma-padārtha-kartṛ- svarupāśrayaṇena*) the gods tried to subdue the demons.<sup>136</sup> *Udgītha* implies the chief *prāṇa* or the life-spirit, as the singer (*udgatṛ*) of the mystic *sāma* also the *udgītha-devatā*. The gods made a thorough search for *udgītha* or the *udgītha-devatā* in different spheres of their own existence before finding him and after finding him their search ended.

The two demons Madhu-Kaiṭabha were attracted by the melodious recitation of the Vedic hymns and went to find out its origin. At that time, god Hayaśirodhara went to the place where the Vedas were kept by the demons, quickly picked up the Vedas and returned them to Brahmā—

“Tatastāvasurau kṛtvā vedān samayabandhanāt/  
Rasātale vinikṣipya yataḥ śavdastato drutau//  
Etasminnantare Rājan! Devo hayaśirodharah/  
Jagrāha vedānakhilān rasātalogato hariḥ//  
Prādācca brahmaṇe bhūyastataḥ svām prakṛtiṃ gataḥ/  
Sthāpayitvā hayaśira udakpūrve mahodadhau/  
Vedānāmālayaṅcāpi vabhūvāśvaśirāstataḥ//”<sup>137</sup>

Having restored the Vedas to Brahmā, He kept his horse-head form (*Hayaśirorupa*) in the north-eastern sea to assume the natural form of Nārāyaṇa. Commentator says—

“Aśvaśirā hariḥ udakpūrve uttarapūrvakoṇasthe mahodadhau  
vedānāmālayaṃ hayaśirastarūpaṃ, sthāpayitvā svām prakṛtiṃ  
nārāyaṇarūpaṃ gato vabhūva//”<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Śaṅkara’s commentary on *BU*, p.91.

<sup>137</sup> *MBh*, 12.335.52-54.

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In the context of the above mentioned last verse P.C Roy states that—

“It is difficult to settle the reading of this Verse. The Bengal texts have ‘*ālayaḥ*’, the Bombay edition has ‘*ālayam*’. At any rate, Verse 58 seems to contradict the previous Verse. If after restoring the Vedas to Brahmā, Nārāyaṇa returned to his own nature, where would his form be that had the horse-head?”<sup>139</sup>

### 3.VII. Slaying of the demons Madhu-Kaitabha:

The two demons Madhu and Kaitabha, quickly came back to that spot where they kept Vedas after they could not find the source or person from where the sounds came. However, they guessed that the Vedas were stolen by Viṣṇu. The two extremely powerful demons rushed out from the nether region.

Returning to the spot where the primeval lotus gave them birth, they found the puissant being, the creator, who existed assuming the form of Aniruddha with fair complexion and endowed with grandeur like the moon. He the possessor of immense powers was under the sway of yoga-sleep, his body stretched on the waters and dwelling in a space as vast as itself:<sup>140</sup>

“Tata uttamāsthāya vegam valavatāmbarau/  
Punaruttasthatuḥ śīghram rasānāmālayāttadā/  
Dadṛśāte ca puruṣam tamevādikaram prabhum//  
Śvetam candraviśuddhābhamaniruddhatanau sthitam/

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<sup>138</sup> Commentary of the Bengal edition of *MBh*, 12.331.58. p.3724.

<sup>139</sup> Roy. P.C, *The Mahābhārat*. pp.605-606.

<sup>140</sup> Roy. P.C, *The Mahābhārata*. p. 606.

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Bhūyo'apyamitavikrāntaṃ nidrāyogamupāgataṃ//  
Ātmapramāṇaracite apāmuparikalpīte/  
Śayane nāgabhogāḍhye jvālāmālāsamāvṛte//”<sup>141</sup>

The body of the supreme Lord possessing extraordinary brilliance, and with the attribute of *sattva*, laid on the *anantanāga* that appeared to radiate flames of fire for the resplendence attached to it. Looking at him the two demons roared into a loud laugh.<sup>142</sup> Endued with the attributes of *rajas* and *tamas*, they said—

“Ayaṃ sa puruṣaḥ śvetaḥ śete nidrāmupāgataḥ//  
Anena nūnaṃ vedānāṃ kṛtamāharaṇaṃ rasāt/  
Kasyaiṣa ko nu khalveṣa kiñca svapiti bhogavān//  
Itiuccāritavākyaṃ tau vodhayāmāsaturharim//”<sup>143</sup>

With these words, the two demons aroused Hari from his Yoga-slumber.”<sup>144</sup>

Nārāyaṇa, was awakened and He anticipated that the demons planned to have an encounter with him. Nārāyaṇa also set his mind to satisfy their wish. Instantly a battle took place between them. The demons were embodiments of the attributes of *rajas* and *tamas* and Nārāyaṇa an attribute of *sāttva*.

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<sup>141</sup> *MBh*, 12.335.53-55.

<sup>142</sup> “Niṣkalmaṣeṇa sattvena sampannaṃ ruciraprabhaṃ/  
Taṃ dṛṣṭvā dānavendraṃ tau mahāhāsamamuñcatām//  
Ūcatuśca samāviṣṭau rajasā tamasā ca tau//”*MBh*, 12.335.59-60a.

<sup>143</sup> *MBh*, 12.335.60b-62a.

<sup>144</sup> Roy. P.C, *The Mahābhārata*, p.606.

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“Atha yuddhaṃ samabhavattayornārāyaṇasya ca/  
Rajastamoviṣṭatanū tāvibhau madhukaiṭabhau/  
Brahmaṇo’pacitiṃ kurvvan jaghāna madhusūdanaḥ//”<sup>145</sup>

Nārāyaṇa slew both the demons to gratify Brahmā. By killing the demon Madhu Nārāyaṇa came to be known by the name of *Madhusūdana*, the slayer of Madhu. Thereafter aided by Lord Nārāyaṇa and assisted by the Vedas, Brahmā created all the three worlds with movables and immovables. The story ends with the following *śloka*—

“Tau dānavau harirhatvā kṛtvā hayaśirastanum/  
Punaḥ pravṛttidharmārthaṃ tameva vidadhe tanum//  
Evameva mahābhāgo vabhūvāśvaśirā hariḥ/  
Paurāṇametat prakhyātaṃ rūpaṃ varadamaśvaram//”<sup>146</sup>

In this way Lord Nārāyaṇa in his horse headed form killed the demon Madhu-Kaiṭabha and then resumed his original appearance for sake of worldly pleasure.

This ancient myth of Hayaśira Viṣṇu is said to be similar to the Vedas<sup>147</sup> and it has also been said that person who frequently listens to and recites this *upākhyāna* with devotion, his learning and wisdom can never be

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<sup>145</sup> *MBh*, 12.335.63b-64.

<sup>146</sup> *MBh*, 12.335.68-69.

<sup>147</sup> “Etaddhyaśiro rājannākhyānaṃ tava kīrtitaṃ/

Purāṇaṃ vedasammitaṃ yanmāṃ tvaṃ paripṛcchasi//”*Mbh*, 12.335.72.

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destroyed.<sup>148</sup> Lord Hayaśira is famous in the several *purāṇic* myths also. It will be discussed in the following chapter.

**Hayagrīva as reflected in the *Harivaṃśa*:**

The *Harivaṃśa* is believed to be an appendix or supplement to the *Mahābhārata* and quite similar in genre to the *purāṇas*. Several comments have been written on the close relationship between *Harivaṃśa* and *purāṇas*. In this context Rocher says that stories are retold from the *Harivaṃśa* in *purāṇas* like *Viṣṇupurāṇa* and *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*.

In the *Harivaṃśa*, Kṛṣṇa is the supreme lord and various episodes of his life including the great deeds he performed as an incarnation of Viṣṇu, is portrayed here. There is also reference of Hayagrīva as a demon who is similar to that of the *Mahābhārata*. In the *Harivaṃśa* Hayagrīva is listed among other demons like Vipracitti, Śibi, Ayośaṅku, Ayośiras, Aśvaśiras. The demons accompanied Bāli to fight against Viṣṇu in his Vāmana form.<sup>149</sup> Interestingly Hayagrīva is listed with Aśvaśiras who appears to be a horse headed one. In other place of *Harivaṃśa*, Hayagrīva is mentioned as conflicting with the gods regarding the legend of Tāraka battle.<sup>150</sup> Subsequently *Harivaṃśa* mentions Hayagrīva in the list of other demons like Maya, Tārā, Varāha, Śveta and Svaralamba gathered to help the demon Kālanemi.<sup>151</sup> In *Harivaṃśa* 44.67, portrays two demons, one is called

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<sup>148</sup> “Yo hyetadbrāhmaṇo nityaṃ śṛṇuyāddhārayīta vā/

Na tasyādhyayanaṃ nāsamupagacchet kadācana//” *MBh*, 12.335.70.

<sup>149</sup> *HariV*, 31.68-70.

<sup>150</sup> *ibid.*, 33.15.

<sup>151</sup> *ibid.*, 37.6.

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Hayagrīva and the other is an incarnation of Hayagrīva called Keśi. However, these two demons were ultimately killed by Kṛṣṇa. The *VP* gives an older version of the story of Keśi who was not at all connected with the demon Hyagrīva.<sup>152</sup> In other place of this text Hayagrīva accompanied the demons Nisunda, Pañcājana and Varadatta and other hundred sons of Bhaumāsura.<sup>153</sup> In 92.8 of *Harivaṃśa* it is mentioned that Hayagrīva along with Nisunda and Narakāsura was killed by Kṛṣṇa. *Harivaṃśa* 109.40 has a list of the heroic actions of Kṛṣṇa. Here it is stated that Kṛṣṇa killed the demon Hayagrīva and his companions to do good to the gods. It is significant that early records testify that Hayagrīva was always killed by Kṛṣṇa but not by Viṣṇu. On other hand, *MBh* describes the horse headed god is a form of Viṣṇu, most frequently called Aśvaśiras and Hayaśiras. It appears that throughout the epic period two somewhat variant trends of horse headed form are available. The *Mahābhārata* refers to the divine Hayaśira, but the *Harivaṃśa* mentions the Hayagrīva as a demon, both being distinct manifestations of energy, one as implied as good and the other as evil.

The mythological narrative of Hayaśira Viṣṇu mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* provides us with the picture of Viṣṇu in cosmic form. It reminds us of the Vedic connection of the cosmic form of the sacrificial horse, and also how Viṣṇu assumed a horse-headed form in a cosmic manner. Another point to be noted in this connection is that the names of the demons, having the meaning of the forms of horse, are said to be the sons of Danu. We come to know from the *Mahābhārata* that Madhu and Kaiṭabha were killed for stealing of the Vedas, but it is not mentioned clearly whether

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<sup>152</sup> *VP*,5.15.

<sup>153</sup> *HariV*,91.19.

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the demon Hayagrīva abducted the Vedas and whether he was punished for a similar sin or any other offence. This ambiguity turns as a source of animation for the expansion of the myth of demon Hayagrīva in the later *purāṇa* texts.

Thus, in the central myth of *Mahābhārata*, the killing of Madhu and Kaiṭabha by Hayaśira Viṣṇu is linked with the element of allegory. Madhu and Kaiṭabha are the symbolic representations of the qualities, the inert *tamas* and passionate *rajas*, which are inherently opposed to the luminous pure *sattva*, the symbolic form of Viṣṇu. Here it is stated that the two demons were overwhelmed by the qualities of *tamas* and *rajas*, the two elements of their origin. Vedas are symbolically represented as knowledge, through which the *sattva guṇa* is acquired. The central myth of Hayagrīva serves the important point that lord Viṣṇu attained the form of horse headed god to recover the stolen Vedas from the demons Madhu-Kaiṭabha, and became the supreme lord of learning and wisdom.

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# CHAPTER IV: HAYAGRĪVA IN DIFFERENT PURĀṆAS



The *purāṇas*<sup>1</sup> occupy a unique position in Indian literature, both sacred and secular, preserve the vast cultural history of ancient India with historical legends, traditions, sacred rituals, ceremonies and various diverse arts and sciences. They aim at glorifying the great divinities of Brahmā, Viṣṇu or Śiva and their several forms; but to apotheosize their own specific deity as superior to others, they turn sectarian. Prof. Sukumari Bhattacharji comments,

“Purāṇas are sectarian scriptures, each magnifying the cult and character of Śiva, Brahmā or one or other of the incarnations of Viṣṇu.”<sup>2</sup>

Viṣṇu, a major god of Indian pantheon originated in the *R̥gveda*, and there is a vast mythological elaboration of Viṣṇu in the post Vedic texts like the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas*. In the post Vedic age, Lord Viṣṇu gradually emerged as a prominent and independent deity; a trend of combining both human and animal forms as incarnations of Viṣṇu is often seen. The incarnation of the half-horse & half-man Viṣṇu variously known as Hayagrīva, Hayaśiras or Hayaśirṣa, Hayāsya finds mention in the *Mahābhārata* and in some *purāṇas*. Hayagrīva is mentioned in the *śānti parva* of the *Mahābhārata* where we learn how the Horse-headed Viṣṇu brings back the stolen Vedas and how He kills the demons Madhu and

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<sup>1</sup> The word *purāṇa* meant originally nothing but ‘*Purāṇam Akhyānam*’ i.e. ‘old story’. In the Kauṭilyīya Arthaśāstra I, 5 in its definition of *itihāsa* enumerates *purāṇa* and *itivṛtta* as belonging to the content of *itihāsa*. As *itivṛtta* can only mean a “Historical event”, *purāṇa* probably means “mythological and legendary lore.”

<sup>2</sup> Sukumari Bhattacharji: *The Indian Theogony. A comparative Study of the Indian Mythology from the Vedas to Purāṇas*, p.19.

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Kaiṭabha. The story of the *Mahābhārata* symbolizes the triumph of the supreme knowledge being guided by the god over the demons of passion and darkness. The accounts found in the *Mahābhārata* and the *purāṇas* are conflicting, but they provide us with valuable materials regarding the origin of Hayagrīva concept and extent of the cult in ancient India.

The *purāṇas* belong to the religious literature which culminates in the worship of Viṣṇu and Śiva, they are approximately what the Veda is for the oldest religion, the Brāhmaṇism. The *purāṇas* are closely connected with the epic. They go back undoubtedly to a very distant past and have their roots in the Vedic texts. We come across numerous legends previously noted in the Ṛgvedic hymns and the *Brāhmaṇas*, again in the *purāṇas*.

*Purāṇas* have generated the concept of trinity, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara. However, though ancient *purāṇas* are identified with five characteristic features, the sectarian approach, although prominent is not a feature of the *purāṇas*. Winternitz states that,

“What is especially significant of almost all our *purāṇas*, their sectarian character, i.e., their being dedicated to the cult of some god or other, of Viṣṇu and Śiva, is completely ignored by the old definitions.”<sup>3</sup>

Even though there is no mention of such feature, the *purāṇas* themselves have recognized that feature. Eighteen *purāṇas* have been divided into three categories known as *sāttvika*, *rājasa* and *tāmasa*, depending upon the three *guṇas* like *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. But here instead of these three categories of *sāttvika*, *rājasa* and *tāmasa*, we take them as *Vaiṣṇava*, *Śākta* and *Śaiva*,

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<sup>3</sup> M, Winternitz: *History of Indian Literature*, Vol. I, p. 522.

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the religio-sectarian *purāṇas* divided among religious communities to progress our discussion about the presence of Hayagrīva.

In this chapter we have tried to highlight a point as to how Hayagrīva appears in different *purāṇas* and then we have shown different contradictory observations about Hayagrīva in several sectarian *purāṇas*.

In the post epic *purāṇa* literature, the prominent *purāṇas* which give an insight into Hayagrīva are, the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, *Agnipurāṇa*, *Devībhāgabatapurāṇa* etc. The tradition of incarnations of Viṣṇu conceived in ancient times, crystallized into form and conception of the ten incarnations subsequently, but the list varies from text to text. An effort to analyse the Hayagrīva concept reflected in different *purāṇas*, has been made from four different angles which are as follows:

- ❖ Establishment of Hayagrīva in different *purāṇas* as an *avatāra*.
- ❖ Mythological aspect of the Hayagrīva in different *purāṇas*.
- ❖ Iconographical descriptions of Hayagrīva in different *purāṇas*.
- ❖ Mode of worship of Hayagrīva.

#### 1. Establishment of Hayagrīva in different *Purāṇas* as an *avatāra*:

The *Vaiṣṇava purāṇas* tries to establishment Hayagrīva as an *avatāra*. Their views are noted bellow.

- ❖ In the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* Hayagrīva finds the fourth place among the count of *avatāras*. The count goes as Matsya, Kurma, Varāha, Aśva and Simha.
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“Matsyakūrmavarāhāśca-siṃharūpādibhiḥ sthitim/  
Cakāra jagato yo’hajaḥ yo’hadya māmālapīṣyati//”<sup>4</sup>

*Aśva* refers to Hayagrīva Viṣṇu with the head of a Horse, who is said to manifest after the end of a grand sacrifice, performed by Brahmā. He breathed the Vedas through his nostrils as mentioned in second book of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*. The fourth *avatāra* is always elsewhere to be the *Vāmana* or dwarf, but in the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, *Aśva* is mentioned as fourth *avatāra*<sup>5</sup> of Viṣṇu. Interestingly *Varāha*, *Aśva* and *Simha* are anthropomorphic, bearing boar’s head or horse’s head as well as lion’s head respectively in the human body. However, they are somehow different from the *Matsya avatāra*. Study of the *purāṇa* texts reveals that *Matsya*, *Varāha* and *Aśva* form of Viṣṇu symbolize a direct or indirect association with revival of the earth from drowning.

Again the same *purāṇa* describes in context with *Jambudvīpavarṇanam*, that such incarnations reside in certain regions—

“Bhadrāśve varṣe bhagavān viṣṇurāste hayaśirā dvija/  
Varāhaḥ ketumāle tu bhārate kūrmarūpadhṛk//  
Matsyarūpaśca govinda karuṣvānte janārdanaḥ/  
Viśvarūpena sarvatra sarvaḥ sarveśvaro hariḥ//”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> “Matsyakūrmavarāhāśca-siṃharūpādibhiḥ sthitim/

*Cakāra jagato yo’hajaḥ yo’hadya māmālapīṣyati//”ViP, 5.17.11.*

<sup>5</sup> Descent of an incarnation in this earth particularly the incarnation of Viṣṇu is available in ten principal forms, viz. the fish, tortoise, boar, man-lion, dwarf, the two Ramas, Kṛṣṇa, Buddha and Kalki.

<sup>6</sup> VP, 2.2.49-50.

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In *Bhadrāśva*, the twice born one, Viṣṇu resides, as horse headed Hayaśiras; in *Ketumāla*, as the Varāha; as the Kūrma in *Bhārata*; as the Matsya in *Kuru*; in his all pervasive role, the omnipresent Hari is everywhere.<sup>7</sup>

There are four principle regions in relation to mount Meru which is at the centre and a) *Bhadrāśva* is in the east of Mount Meru , b) *Ketumāla* is west of Mount Meru, c) *Bhārata* in the south of Mount Meru and d) *Kuru* that is in the north of Mount Meru.<sup>8</sup> Willson states that, Meru is confined in north and south by the two mountains *Nīla* and *Niṣadha*, and in the east and west by *Gandhamādana* and *Mālyavān*. The mountains appear as pericarp of a lotus with Meru within. The petals of the lotus world are represented by the countries *Bhārata*, *Ketumāla*, *Bhadrāśva*, and *Uttarakuru*.<sup>9</sup>

❖ ***Bhāgavatapurāṇa*** contains four lists of incarnation of Viṣṇu found in the first<sup>10</sup>, second<sup>11</sup>, the tenth<sup>12</sup> and the eleventh<sup>13</sup> skandhas. The second, third and the forth list of *avatāras* include Hayagrīva as the tenth<sup>14</sup>, second<sup>15</sup> and the sixth<sup>16</sup> incarnation of Viṣṇu respectively, while in the first<sup>17</sup> list of *avatāra* Hayagrīva is not available.

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<sup>7</sup> Nath Datta, Manmath: *Viṣṇu Purāṇam English translation*, p.119.

<sup>8</sup> Williams, Monier: *Sanskrit English Dictionary*, pp. 294,309, 746, 753.

<sup>9</sup> Wilson, H.H: *Viṣṇu Purāṇa, A System of Hindu Mythology and Tradition*, p.139.

<sup>10</sup> *BhP*,1.3.1-25.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*,2.7.1-38.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*,10.40.17-22.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*,11.4.1-23.

<sup>14</sup> (i) Varāha, (ii) Suyajña, (iii) Kapila, (iv) Dattaḥ, (v) Four sages: Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanātana, Sanatkumāra, (vi) Nārāyaṇa and Nara, (vii) Dhruva, (viii) Pṛthu, (ix) R̥ṣabha, (x) Hayagrīva, (xi) Matsya, (xii) Kūrma, (xiii) Nṛsiṃha, (xiv) Gajendra, (xv) Vāmana,

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In the second list Brahmā narrates various forms of Viṣṇu with their specific activities. Regarding Hayagrīva Brahmā states:

“Satre mamāsa bhagavān hayaśīraṣātho/  
Sākṣāt sa Yajñapurūṣastapanīyavarṇaḥ/  
Chandomayo makhamayo’akhiladevatātmā  
Vāco vabhūvuruśatīḥ śvasato’asya nastah//”<sup>18</sup>

That glorious lord incarnated as Hayagrīva, horse necked god, of complexion like gold is the *Yajñapurūṣa* presiding deity of all sacrifices. He is the main object of worship in the Vedas or Veda incarnate, the sacrifice incarnate for whose grace sacrifices are performed and who is the soul of all the deities. From the breath out of his nostrils beautiful words i.e., Vedic hymns came forth.<sup>19</sup>

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(xvi) Dhanvantari, (xvii) Paraśurāma, (xviii) Rāma, (xix) Balarāma, (xx) Kṛṣṇa, (xxi) Buddha, (xxii) Kalkin. *ibid.*, 2.7.1-38.

<sup>15</sup> (i) Matsya, (ii) Hayagrīva, (iii) Kūrma, (iv) Varāha, (v) Nṛsiṃha, (vi) Vāmana, (vii) Paraśurāma, (viii) Rāma, (ix) Buddha and (x) Kalkin. *ibid.*, 10.40.17-22.

<sup>16</sup> (i) Nara and Nārāyaṇa, (ii) Haṃsa, (iii) Dattātreyā, (iv) Four sages: Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanātana, Sanatkumara, (v) Rṣabha, (vi) Hayagrīva, (vii) Matsya, (viii) Varāha, (ix) Kūrma, (x) Nṛsiṃha, (xi) Vāmana, (xii) Paraśurāma, (xiii) Rāma, (xiv) Kṛṣṇa, (xv) Buddha, (xvi) Kalkin. *ibid.*, 11.4.1-23.

<sup>17</sup> (i) Four sages: Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanātana, Sanatkumāra, (ii) Varāha, (iii) Nārada, (iv) Nara and Nārāyaṇa, (v) Kapila, (vi) Dattātreyā the son of atri, (vii) Yajña, (viii) Rṣabha, (ix) Prthu, (x) Matsya, (xi) Kūrma, (xii) Dhanvantari, (xiii) Mohinī, (xiv) Nṛsiṃha, (xv) Vāmana, (xvi) Paraśurāma, (xvii) Vyāsa the son of Parāśara, (xviii) Rāma, (xix) Kṛṣṇa, (xx) Balarāma, (xxi) Buddha and (xxii) Kalkin. *ibid.*, 1.3.1-25.

<sup>18</sup> *BhP*, 2.7.11.

<sup>19</sup> Shastri. J. L., Tagare. G. V: *The Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (Part-1), pp.189-90.

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Here in this reference Hayagrīva is associated with the *Yajñapuruṣa*. It may be the indication of the later Vedic myth found in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* and *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* where Yajña's head was cut off and again replaced by a horse's head. The complete verse portrays Hayagrīva as an *avatāra* and also the source of sacrifice and the Vedas. In this manner Hayagrīva, the horse headed god is the embryonic entity, an embodiment that portrayed in the famous *Puruṣa Sūkta* of *Rgveda*.

The third list of *avatāras* mentioned in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* glorifies the form of Hayagrīva, a horse headed god, for his slaying the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha—

“Namaḥ kāraṇamatsyāya pralayavdhicarāya ca/  
Hayaśīrṣṇe namastubhyaṃ madhukaiṭabhamṛtyave//”<sup>20</sup>

My bow to you, the fish incarnation, the cause of the world who moved freely in the cosmic water of the ocean of deluge. Hail to you who assumed the form of Hayagrīva, horse necked god for killing the demons Madhu-Kaiṭabha.<sup>21</sup>

The fourth list of *avatāra* in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* depicts Hayagrīva as one of the various incarnations of Viṣṇu. In the eleventh skandha Drumila describe the Lord's incarnation as:

“Haṃsasvarūpya vadadacyuta ātmayogaṃ  
Dattaḥ kumāra ṛṣabho bhagavān pitā naḥ/

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<sup>20</sup> *BhP*, 10.40.17.

<sup>21</sup> Shastri. J. L, Tagare. G. V: *Op.cit.* p.1501.

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Viṣṇuḥ śivāya jagatām kalayāvatīrṇa-  
Stenāhṛtā madhubhidā śrutayo hayāsyē//”<sup>22</sup>

For the welfare of the world Lord Viṣṇu personified in his own resplendence, in the form of a swan to expound *jñānayoga* to god Brahmā . . . . Taking a horse necked form god Hayagrīva, killed the demon Madhu and retrieved the Vedas.<sup>23</sup>

Both the third and fourth lists refer Hayagrīva as associated with the recovery of the stolen Vedas and slaying of the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha. These references remind us of the myth of Hayaśīra Viṣṇu as found in the *Mahābhārata*. It gradually developed into the purāṇic myth of Hayagrīva at a later period.

❖ The *Vāmanapurāṇa* primarily mentions Hayagrīva as the third incarnation of Viṣṇu. In this text no incarnation is mentioned after Vāmana. R.C Hazra states that the word *avatāra* is rarely used here in connection with Viṣṇu’s incarnations, but the word *prādurbhāva* in its stead is found.<sup>24</sup>

❖ In the *Agnipurāṇa* Hayagrīva is reflected as the fifth incarnation of Viṣṇu:

“Varāha narasiṃheśa vāmaneśa trivikrama/  
Hayagrīveśa sarvveśa hṛṣīkeśa harāśubhaṃ//”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> BhP, 11.4.17.

<sup>23</sup> Shastri, J. L, Tagare. G. V: *Op.cit.* pp.1918-1919.

<sup>24</sup> Hazra, R.C: *Studies in the Purāṇic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs*, p.87.

<sup>25</sup> AgniP, 31.6.

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Salutations, O Boar, lord as Man lion, lord as dwarf, Trivikrama, lord as Horse necked Hayagrīveśa, lord of all beings, Hṛṣīkeśa Viṣṇu the lord of all senses, destroy my impurity.<sup>26</sup>

Here Hayagrīva is mentioned along with some of the traditional *avatāras* of Viṣṇu with respect to ritual. The traditional *avatāras* and Hayagrīva are mentioned here in regard to “*Mode of Cleansing oneself and others*” in which the god agni narrates the ritual of cleansing prescribed with an intention to free oneself from suffering and conquer the joy. *Agnipurāṇa* contains probably the earliest list of the twenty four *avatāras* of Viṣṇu.

- ❖ The *Dhyāna mantra* of ***Garuda Purāṇa*** (chapter 202) provides us a list of various forms or *mūrtis* of Viṣṇu along with others. The traditional ten incarnations are present here, but there are several others including Hayagrīva. They are respectively: (i) Matsya, (ii) Trivikrama, (iii) Vāmana, (iv) Nṛsiṃha, (v) Varāha, (vi) Nārāyaṇa, (vii) Kapila, (viii) Hayagrīva , (ix) Nārada, (x) Kūrma, (xi) Dhanvantari, (xii) Śeṣanāga, (xiii) Yajña, (xiv) Vyāsa, (xv) Buddha, (xvi) Kalkin, (xvii) Viṣṇu, (xviii) Madhusūdana, (xix) Mādhava, (xx) Hṛṣīkeśa, (xxi) Janārdana, (xxii) Śrīdhara, (xxiii) Padmanābha, (xxiv) Vāsudeva. Hayagrīva is mentioned here as the eighth incarnation of Viṣṇu.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Shastri, J. L, Bhatt. G. P, Gangadharan.N. *The Agni Purāṇa (Part 1)*, p.82.

<sup>27</sup> *GarP*, 202.

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Although there is no clear reference of Hayagrīva as the redeemer of the Vedas from the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha, by slaying them, however the text contains the idea of worship and iconographical details of Hayagrīva.

- ❖ Form the reference of *Matsyapurāṇa* it seems that Hayagrīva might be an antecedent to the *Matsyāvatāra*. Moreover, the text contains the core concept of the *Vaiṣṇava* myth about Hayagrīva who recovered the Vedas from the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha by slaying them. However, here is no explicit description of Hayagrīva as Viṣṇu.

In both the *Vāmanapurāṇa* and *Matsyapurāṇa* it might not be intended to indicate a fixed list of *avatāras* of Viṣṇu but the *purāṇakāra*'s intention might be to mention the image as the destroyer of evil.

This concept of Hayagrīva as an *avatāra* in several *Vaiṣṇava purāṇas* might be followed from the Hayaśīras *avatāra* as mentioned in the account of *śānti parva* of the *Mahābhārata*. The *śānti parva* simply refers to Hari's taking of horse head as a second form.<sup>28</sup> The specific terminology associated with the horse-headed manifestation, however, is not yet that of the classical *avatāra* doctrine. Van Gulik finds the oldest *avatāra* list that unquestionably includes the horse form to be that of *Viṣṇupurāṇa*.<sup>29</sup> Gonda also pointedly agree with him.<sup>30</sup> According to Kramrisch, the iconic form of Hayagrīva along with a brief reference to his rescuing of the Vedas from the two demons is given in

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<sup>28</sup> “*Jahau nidrāmātha tadā vedakāryārthamudyataḥ/*

*Aiśvareṇa prayogeṇa dvitīyaṃ tanumāṁsthitāḥ//*”MBh,12.335.43.

<sup>29</sup> Van Gulik, R.H: Hayagrīva: *The Mantrayānic Horse Cult of China and Japan*, p.17.

<sup>30</sup> Gonda, J: *Aspect of Early Viṣṇuism*, p. 148.

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the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*.<sup>31</sup> This description of Hayagrīva follows the man-lion and the boar.

## 2. Mythological aspect of Hayagrīva in different purāṇas:

Amongst the five sectarian groups of the *purāṇas* such as, the *Vaiṣṇava*, *Śākta*, *Śaiva*, *Gāṇapatya* and *Saura*, three of the major sectarian *purāṇas* mention Hayagrīva. The central *vaiṣṇava* myth of Hayagrīva is based on the theme of recovery of the Vedas from the demon(s). However, the Hayagrīva myths are found in different sectarian *purāṇas* with some variations, but more or less similar in the *śaiva* and the *śākta purāṇas*. In the *vaiṣṇava purāṇas* Hayagrīva is portrayed as an incarnation of Viṣṇu who protects the Vedas for the welfare of the universe.<sup>32</sup> On the contrary, we find the demon(s) slain by Lord Viṣṇu for stealing the Vedas.<sup>33</sup> Elsewhere it is seen that Hayagrīva was slain by Viṣṇu due to personal conflict rather than stealing of the Vedas.<sup>34</sup>

- ❖ The *Matsya Purāṇa* describes that in a great deluge when the whole world was burnt down Viṣṇu in the form of a horse restored the four Vedas and Vedāṅgas. Here in this *purāṇa* Matsya himself says—

“Nirdagdheṣu ca lokeṣu vājīrūpeṇa vai mayā/  
Aṅgāni caturo vedāḥ purāṇaṁ nyāyavistaram//

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<sup>31</sup> Kramrisch, Stella: *Viṣṇudharmottara: A Treatise on Indian Painting and Image Making*. Trans, pp. 104-105.

<sup>32</sup> *MatP*, 53.5; *AgniP*, 2.1-17; *BhP*, 5.18.1-6, 7.9.37, 8.24.7-57, 11.4.17.

<sup>33</sup> *AgniP*, 2.1-1, *BhP*, 8.24.7-57.

<sup>34</sup> *ViP*, 5.19; *MatP*, 173.15; *Bh.P*, 6.10.19, 8.10.21, 7. 2.4-5.

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Mīmāṃsāṃ dharmasāstraṅca pariṅhya mayā kṛtaṃ/  
Matsyarūpeṇa ca punaḥ kalpādāvudakārṇave//”<sup>35</sup>

When the entire region was devastated by fire at the great dissolution, I in the form of a Horse took the four *vedas* with the six *vedāṅgas*, as well as the *purāṇas*, the manifold *nyāyas*, the *mīmāṃsās* and the *dharmasāstras*. Thereafter in the beginning of a new age I assumed the form of *matsya* immersing myself in the furious water at the time of dissolution of the universe and explained them fully to Brahmā.

- ❖ In the *Agnipurāṇa* we come across a reference where agni describes the manifestation of Hari in the form of fish for the destruction of the wicked persons and the protection of the pious.<sup>36</sup> Here we see the myth where *matsya* mentions to Manu about a time when Viṣṇu was manifested as a fish<sup>37</sup> who would save Manu along with the seven sages when the ocean would flood the earth.<sup>38</sup> Thus Manu heard the *purāṇa*, the destroyer of all sin as narrated by *matsya* and praised it.<sup>39</sup> Later, it appears that the demon Hayagrīva while devastating the Vedas, was killed by Viṣṇu who assumed the form of a fish and recovered the Vedas—

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<sup>35</sup> *MatP*,53.5.

<sup>36</sup> “*Matsyāvatāraṃ vakṣye ’haṃ vaśiṣṭha śṛṇu vai hareḥ/  
Avatārakriyā duṣṭanaṣṭyai satpālanāya hi//*” *AgniP*,2.2.

<sup>37</sup> *AgniP*,2.3-10.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*,2.11-15.

<sup>39</sup> “*Śuśrāva matsyāt pāpagnaṃ saṁstuvan stutibhiśca taṃ//*” *ibid.*,2.16a.

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“Brahmavedapraharttāraṃ Hayagrīva ṅca dānavaṃ//”<sup>40</sup>

The matter of abduction of the Vedas as well as the slaying of the demon Hayagrīva is only indicated in the *Matsyapurāṇa*, but the myth of slaying of the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha (*madhu-kaiṭabhavadhaṃ*) appears in a chapter in this *purāṇa*.<sup>41</sup> However, the incident is not directly linked to the revelation of the Vedas, but it is relevant with the incident of Madhu and Kaiṭabha’s annihilation by Lord Viṣṇu. Here it is not clear whether Lord Viṣṇu assumed a horse headed form to kill the demons. But a different version can be found in the same *purāṇa*, where *matsya* himself says that while the world was destroyed in a great deluge, He took a horse form to recompile the *vedas* and *vedāṅgas*.<sup>42</sup>

Both *Matsyapurāṇa* and *MBh* consider Vedas are the source of the entire creation, having a similar myth where Viṣṇu is the rescuer of the creation. However, they differently opine Madhu and Kaiṭabha as the obstructers of creation (*MP*) and they are the abductors of the Vedas (*MBh*). So the original Hayaśīra myth appears to be reflected in the great epic *Mahābhārata* which might be developed in the *Matsyapurāṇa* subsequently.

❖ To have a clear view about the Hayagrīva myth, we may discuss the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*’s account which is briefly narrated at the start of the text of the *Matsyapurāṇa*. In the *MatP* the narrative has started

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<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, 2.16b.

<sup>41</sup> *MatP*, 170.1-30.

<sup>42</sup> “Nirdagdheṣu ca lokeṣu vajīrūpeṇa vai mayā/  
*Angāni caturo vedāḥ purāṇṇi nyāyavistaraṃ//*” *MatP*, 53.5.

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with the incident of rescuing of Manu from the flood of dissolution. Here we can find *Matsya*, as saying to Manu that at the beginning of the re-creation of the universe *Matsya* shall propagate the Vedic knowledge.<sup>43</sup> Brown says that—

“The *Bhāgavata*’s account in this context is basically as same as the *MatP*, but compiles an interesting introduction and conclusion.”<sup>44</sup> It may be for the congestion of the myth.

The myth is as follows: Long ago, at the end of a *kalpa*, a flood of dissolution began. Brahmā had desired to take a rest and went to sleep. From his mouth slipped out the Vedas which was carried away by the demon Hayagrīva.<sup>45</sup> Katre, O’Flaherty and S.S.Dange noted this curious development.<sup>46</sup> Noticing the act of Hayagrīva Lord Hari assumed the form of a glittering fish.<sup>47</sup> From this point the traditional *matsya* account starts. This account ends with the reference of *matsya*’s teaching to the king about the divine anthology of the *purāṇa* known as ‘*Matsyapurāṇa*’ while sporting in the ocean of dissolution.<sup>48</sup> The chapter conclude with these words—

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<sup>43</sup> “*Evamekārṇave jāte cākṣuṣāntarasankṣaye/*

*Vedān pravarttayīṣyāmi tatsargādaḥ mahīpate//*”*MatP*,2.15.

<sup>44</sup> Brown, C. Mackenzie: *The Triumph of the Goddess*,p.37.

<sup>45</sup> “*Kālenāgatanidrasya dhātuḥ śīṣayiṣorvalī/*

*Mukhato niḥśṛṣṭān vedān hayagrīvo ’ntike ’harat//*”*BhP*,8.24.8.

<sup>46</sup> Brown, C. Mackenzie: *Op. cit.* p.244.

<sup>47</sup> “*Jñātvā tad dānavendrasya Hayagrīvasya ceṣṭitam/*

*Dadhāra śapharīrūpaṃ bhagavān harirīśvaraḥ//*”*BhP*,8.24.9.

<sup>48</sup> “*Ityuktavantam nṛpatim bhagavānādipūruṣaḥ/*

*Matsyarūpī mahāmbhodhau viharamstattvamavravīt//*

*Purāṇasaṃhitām divyām sāmkyayogakriyāvatīm/*

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“Atītapralayāpāya utthitāya sa vedase/

Hatvāsuraṃ Hayagrīva m vedaṃ pratyāharaddhariḥ//”<sup>49</sup>

After the *asura* was slain by Lord Hari, Hayagrīva restored the Vedas to Brahmā who awoke after the end of the dissolution. Karmarkar states that—

“Taking a rather literal historical approach to the flood legend he sees the rescue of Manu and the recovery of the Vedas to be probably being attributed to the fish just after the flood subsided, around the time of the end of the pre-aryan and the beginning of the Vedic civilization. But in the next note, the motif of the veda-stealing demon is clearly a late addition.”<sup>50</sup>

In this reference Hayaśiras replaced into Matsya, and the demons Madhu-Kaiṭabha replaced into demon Hayagrīva.<sup>51</sup>

It is interesting to note that in the eighth skandha of *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* the entire myth is cited, where Matsya-Viṣṇu recovers the Vedas from demon Hayagrīva, but in the previous and later skandhas it is stated that Hayaśira-Viṣṇu recovered the Vedas from the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha after killing them.<sup>52</sup> This contradictory and complexing note of the *purāṇakāra* in the *purāṇa* is difficult to understand.

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*Satyabratasya rājarṣerātmagyhyamaśeṣataḥ//”ibid.,8.24.54-55.*

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*,8.24.57.

<sup>50</sup> Brown, C. Mackenzie: *Op.cit.*, ‘loc. cit.’ p.244.

<sup>51</sup> *BhP*,2.7.12 mentions to the new version of the *matsya* story, mentioning the *vedas* slipping from Brahmā’s mouth and Matsya’s recovery from them, but without referring to any demon or demons.

<sup>52</sup> *BhP*,5.18.1-6; 7.9.37; 11.4.17.

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Dikshitar thinks that the purpose of the *matsya avatāra*, was not directly expressed by the *Matsyapurāṇa*. The purpose is explicit in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*'s description, where slaying of Hayagrīva to recover the Vedas is available. Furthermore, he suggests two possibilities of this account, either the *BhP* supplied the motive which was missing in the *MatP*, or the *MatP* was aware for the detailed version described in the *BhP* and did not repeat it.<sup>53</sup> Without taking consensus on date of composition the two *purāṇas* it is incapable to affirm this account. According to Dikshitar, *MatP* is the earliest *purāṇa* and it took its full form around third century A.D.<sup>54</sup> The date of composition of the *BhP* is probably between the eighth and the tenth century A.D.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, the *BhP*'s myth mentions that the '*purāṇic saṃhitā*' is taught by *matsya* as noted in the text. It is an impartial clear reference by the *MatP* pointed out by Prasada, Hohenberger and it is accepted by Śrīdhara also.<sup>56</sup> Hohenberger says that the fish legend of *BhP* adds on to the version of *MatP* and that the *AgniP* account is dependent on the *BhP*'s version.<sup>57</sup> However, Dikshitar accepts that the *BhP*, and *AgniP* follow recent tradition and the *MatP* abides more by the epic.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless the version of *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* is also referred to by other *purāṇas*. *Garuḍapurāṇa* tells us that Hari, having assumed the form of a fish, slew the demon Hayagrīva, recovered the Vedas and protected Manu.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Dikshitar, V.R. Ramchandra: *The Matsya Purāṇa—A Study*, p. 54.

<sup>54</sup> Dikshitar, V.R. Ramchandra: *ibid.*, pp.71-72.

<sup>55</sup> Sheridan, Daniel: *The Advaitic Theism of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, pp.111–113.

<sup>56</sup> Brown, C. Mackenzie: *Op.cit.* p.245.

<sup>57</sup> Brown, C. Mackenzie: *ibid.*, 'loc. cit.' p.245.

<sup>58</sup> Dikshitar, V.R. Ramchandra: *Op. cit.* pp. 5-6.

<sup>59</sup> "Matsyādikasvarūpeṇa avatāraṃ karotyajah/

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Interestingly *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* mentions Hayagrīva as a demon led by Vṛtra against Indra. Sage Śukadeva describes here the battle between Indra and the *asuras*—

“Nanuci śamvaro’ narvā dvimūrdhā ṛṣabho’ mvaraḥ/  
Hayagrīvaḥ śaṅkuśirā vipracittirayomukhaḥ//  
Pulamo vṛṣaparvā ca prahetirhetirutkalaḥ/  
Daiteyā dānavā yakṣā rakṣāṃsī ca sahasraśaḥ//”<sup>60</sup>

In the eighth skanda śuka elaborates the battles between Nārāyaṇa and the demons. Hayagrīva is portrayed here as an *asura*—

“Hayagrīva ḥ śaṅkuśiraḥ kapilo meghadundubhiḥ/  
Tārakaścakradṛk śumbho niśumbho jambha utkalaḥ//”<sup>61</sup>

Elsewhere this *purāṇa* speaks of a myth where demon Hayagrīva is in conflict with Viṣṇu. This passage describes Hayagrīva as one who steals the Vedas. *Matsyapurāṇa* also mention an account of demon Hayagrīva along with others who were, prepared to fight against Viṣṇu with their armies—

“Yuktaṃ rathasahasreṇa Hayagrīva stu dānavaḥ/  
Syandanaṃ vāhayāmāsa sapatnānīkamarddanaḥ//”<sup>62</sup>

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Matsyo bhūtvā Hayagrīvaṃ daityaṃ hatvājikaṇṭakaṃ//

Vedānānīya manvādīnpālayāmāsa keśavaḥ/

Mandaraṃ dhārayāmāsa kūrmo bhūtvā hitāya ca//”*GarP*, 142.2-3.

<sup>60</sup> *BhP*, 6.10.19-20.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*, 8.10.21.

<sup>62</sup> *MatP*, 173.15.

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❖ *Viṣṇupurāṇa* also mention demon Hayagrīva along with Muru, Pañcājana etc. Here only the name Hayagrīva is mentioned for the demon but there is no mention of it as having a horse headed form. In the context of the “*Narakāsuravadhaḥ*” Naraka, the son of earth, who rules over the city of *Prāgjyotiṣa*, inflicts a great injury upon all creatures. Śakra i.e., Indra, came to visit Sauri i.e., Kṛṣṇa at Dvārakā, and told him, about the tyranny of the *asura*.<sup>63</sup> Having heard this, the divine Hari smiled, and after getting up from his throne went to *Prāgjyotiṣa*. The city of *Prāgjyotiṣa* was barred from entry by nooses built by the demon Muru, having edges as sharp as razors. Hari, flung his *sudarśana cakra* and minced them into pieces.<sup>64</sup> Thus having slain Muru, Hayagrīva and Pañcājana, Hari quickly entered *Prāgjyotiṣa*—

“Hatvā muruṃ Hayagrīvaṃ tathā pañcājanam dvija/

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<sup>63</sup> “Bhaumo’yaṃ narako nāmnā prāgjyotiṣapureśvaraḥ/  
Karotisarvvabhūtānāmupaghātamarindama//  
Devasiddhāsurādīnāṃ nṛpāṇāṃca janārdana/  
Hṛtvā hi so’suraḥ kanyā rurodha nijamandire//  
Chatraṃ yat salilasrāvi tadjahāra pracetasah/  
Mandarasya tathā śṛṅgaṃ hṛtavān maṇiparvataṃ//  
Amṛtasrāviṇī divye manmātuḥ kṛṣṇa kuṇḍale/  
Jahāra so’surohadityā vāñchatyairāvataṃ gajaṃ//”VP,5.29.8-11.

<sup>64</sup> “Prāgjyotiṣapurasyāsīt samantācchatayojanaṃ/  
Ācitā mauravaiḥ pāśaiḥ kṣurāntairbhūdvijottama//  
Tāmśiccheda hariḥ pāśān kṣiptvā cakraṃ sudarśanaṃ/  
Tato muruḥ samuttasthau taṃ jaghāna ca keśavaḥ//  
Murośca tanayān sapta sahasrāmstāmstato hariḥ/  
Cakradhārāgninirdagdhamścakāra śalabhāniva//”VP,5.29.16-18.

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Prāgijyotiṣapuram<sup>65</sup> dhīmāmstvarāvān samupāgataḥ//”<sup>66</sup>

Thereafter a fierce conflict took place between Hari and demon Naraka and as a result Naraka was slain by him.<sup>67</sup>

We have found the reference of the divine Hayagrīva as an incarnation of Viṣṇu in the previous *adhyāya*<sup>68</sup> of the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* as well as the demon Hayagrīva found in the same *purāṇa*. But both of these divine and demonic Hayagrīva are not related with the revival of the Vedas. Demon Hayagrīva’s connection with Prāgijyotiṣa and Naraka is mentioned in this *purāṇa* which may lead one to think about the evolution of Hayagrīva in the śākta and tāntrik traditions.

❖ ***Devī-Bhāgavata***, a *śākta purāṇa*, gives a major mythological narrative of Hayagrīva among several *purāṇas*. It combines both the divine and

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<sup>65</sup> The word *Prāgijyotiṣpura* is derived from Sanskrit ‘Prāg’ means former or eastern, and ‘jyotiṣa’ a ‘star’, ‘astrology’, ‘shining,’ ‘pura’ a city thus meaning ‘city of eastern light’ or the ‘city of eastern astrology’. *Prāgijyotiṣa* was at the centre of *Kāmarupa*, inhabited by *kirātas* and a site of the shrines of Devī as Dikkaravisini and Kāmākhyā. *Prāgijyotiṣpura* the name of the capital city is mentioned for the first time in the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata* in connection with its mythical *asura* king Naraka. In the *Vanaparva* of the *Mahābhārata*, the sage Lomaṣa, pointing to a mount tells the *pāṇḍavas*, the story of Naraka. The *daitya* was slain by the supreme lord Kṛṣṇa.

<sup>66</sup> VP, 5.29.19.

<sup>67</sup> “*Narakeṇāsya tatrābhūnmahāsainyena saṃyugam/  
Kṛṣṇasya yatra govindo jaghne daityān sahasraśaḥ//  
Śatrāstravarṣaṃ muñcantam bhaumaṃ taṃ narakaṃ valī/  
Kṣiptvā cakram dvidhā cakre cakrī daiteyacakrahā//*” VP, 5.29.20-21.

<sup>68</sup> VP, 5.17.

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the demonic Hayagrīva in a single myth. The fifth chapter of the first Skandha, named “*Hayagrīvāvatāarakathanam*” of *DBh* introduces a number of important themes that developed at a later period. The passage describes two forms under the same name, i.e., Hayagrīva—one divine and another demonic by nature; the demon Hayagrīva who had a boon from Devī that he would be destroyed by the Viṣṇu-Hayagrīva. In the *DBh* the myth of Hayagrīva, is somewhat different from those of the myths discussed in the *vaiṣṇava purāṇas*. The unexpected disaster of Viṣṇu by losing his head is explained by the motive that no action takes place without reason.

- ❖ *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*, another *śākta purāṇa*, refers Hayagrīva as the incarnation of Viṣṇu. Hayagrīva appear as the revealer of the secret glory of the goddess Lalitā. No reference regarding his origin and victorious achievements has been given. Here Hayagrīva is seen as speaker of the greatness of the mother goddess Lalitā.<sup>69</sup> This is somehow similar to the account of *DBh*, in the manner that as a form of the *tāmasī śakti*, Devī plays an important role. It is said that Hayagrīva obtained the secret knowledge from Devī. It is significant to hold Hayagrīva as the lord of knowledge and wisdom. According to Śrīdhara, this occurrence glorifies Devī over the status of Hayagrīva, a typical feature of the *purāṇas* of its sectarian nature.<sup>70</sup>
- ❖ Like the *DBh*, the *Kālikāpurāṇa* tells us the story as to how Hayagrīva-Viṣṇu killed the demon Jvarāsura, who stayed at *Maṇikūṭa*

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<sup>69</sup> Babu, Sridhara: Hayagrīva: *The Horse-Headed Deity in Indian Culture*, p.38.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, p.38.

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hill for the welfare of men, gods and demons.<sup>71</sup> Interestingly another story in the same text expresses how Viśvanātha the lord of the world (*Jagatpatiḥ*) settled at *Maṇikūṭa* hill after killing the demon Hayagrīva.<sup>72</sup> However, it is not clear whether the Lord of the world is referred to as Lord Viśṇu or Śiva. The context appears to indicate that Śiva is the killer of Hayagrīva.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, Hayagrīva is identified as a famous general of Naraka's army. Naraka<sup>74</sup> with the help of Hayagrīva defeated the gods thrice and was able to rob of the *kuṇḍalas* of Aditī.<sup>75</sup> *KāP* mentions the demon Hayagrīva as the northern door

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<sup>71</sup> “Varṇāśāyā dakṣiṇasyāṃ lohityo brahmaṇāgnisamutthitaḥ/  
Maṇikūṭaḥ sthitaḥ pūrvve hayagrīvo harirṣataḥ//  
Sa Hayagrīvarūpeṇa viṣṇurhatvā jvarāsuram /  
Nihatyaśa Hayagrīvaḥ krīḍāyai yatra sa sthitaḥ//” *KāP*, 78.74-75.

<sup>72</sup> “Hayagrīveṇa yuyudhe tatra devo jagatpatiḥ//  
Hayagrīvam yatra hatvā maṇikuṭam purāgataḥ/  
Tatra yaḥ pūjayeddurgāṃ śāradāṃ tantramantrakaiḥ//  
Hayagrīvasya mantreṇa tantreṇa garuḍadhvajam//” *ibid.*, 80.24b-26a.

<sup>73</sup> B, Kakati: *Aspects of Early Assamese Literature*, pp-71-72.

<sup>74</sup> Narakāśura was an *asura*, the legendary ancestor of all three dynasties of *Prāgjyotiṣa Kāmarūpa*. He is considered to be a son of Bhūdevī. His kingdom, *Prāgjyotiṣa*, find mention in both the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

<sup>75</sup> “Deveśvaram tridhā jitvā Hayagrīvasahāyavān/  
Adityāḥ kuṇḍalayugam triṣu lokeṣu viśrutam//  
Sarvvaratnāmṛtasrāvi duḥkhaviḡhnaḥaram param//  
Jahāra narako bhaumo nirbhīto muniśāpatoḥ/  
Pañcavarṣasahasrāṇi rājyam prāgjyotiṣe'karot//” *KāP*, 40.13-15.  
“Aditeḥ kuṇḍale mohājjahārāmṛtasambhave/  
Denānṛṣhīn vādhamāno vipraṇāmapriye rataḥ//” *ibid.*, 40.53.

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keeper of the city Naraka.<sup>76</sup> In connection with the killing of Hayagrīva, *KāP* says that *Garuḍadhvaja* Kṛṣṇa appeared in *Prāgjyotiṣpur*, killed demon Muru and his six sons together with others. After that Keśava attacked and annihilated the powerful demon Hayagrīva, who had fought with the gods for thousands of years and overthrew the enemies.<sup>77</sup> From the references found in the *KāP*, Hayagrīva not only appeared as a benevolent god, but also he is described as a malevolent demonic form. *KāP* refers to several manifestations of Viṣṇu or Mādhava in connection with Hayagrīva who is worshipped on the *Maṇikūṭa* hill. These references exhort us regarding the Hayagrīva worship in the *Kāmarūpa*, the important center of northeast India.

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<sup>76</sup> “Tataḥ sa paścimadvāri narakāḥ senayā saha/  
Murum dvārādhipaṁ cakre Hayagrīvaṁ tathottare/” *ibid.*, 40.6.

<sup>77</sup> “Tasminnavasare prāpa kṛṣṇaḥ prāgjyotiṣaṁ puraṁ/  
Prathamam paścimaṁ dvāramāsādyā garuḍadhvaja//  
Pāśānām śaṭsahasrāṇi kṣurān sañchidya naikadhā/  
Jaghāna sa murum daityaṁ sāvānugaṇca savāndhavaṁ//  
Śaṭsahasrā mahāvīrā dānavā dvāri samsthitā/  
Hatāścakreṇa hariṇā tadaiva guruṇā saha//  
Murum hatvā sahasrāṇi putrāṁstasyāparāṁśca śaṭ/  
Jaghāna cakreṇa tadā khaṇḍaśo’nyāṁśca dānavān//  
Tatohanekaśilāsaṅghānatikramya janārdanaḥ/  
Sagaṇam sāvānugaṇcaiva nisundaṁ samapothayat//  
Eko yo yodhayeddevān sahasraṁ vatsarān purā/  
Śakraṇca samatikramya mahāvīra prākramaḥ//  
Taṁ jaghāna Hayagrīvaṁ samatikramya keśava/  
Madhye lauhityasaṅgasya bhagavān devakīśutaḥ/” *ibid.*, 40.87.

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- ❖ In the *Skandapurāṇa*, which is a *śaiva purāṇa*, a story mentions how and why the great Hari became the horse headed one.<sup>78</sup> The summary of the account regarding Hayagrīva mentioned in the *Skandapurāṇa* is as follows: Skanda asks Śiva how Hari becomes a horse headed one, who caused the death of the vile demon and made an effort to clarify the meaning of the Vedas. Vyāsa explains, the gods had started a sacrifice chanting the Vedic mantras. All of them went to the milk ocean and asked Bṛhaspati to tell them where Mahāviṣṇu was. After meditating Bṛhaspati found out the existence of Hari's location. The gods saw Mahāviṣṇu sitting in a meditative posture with a bow. They endeavoured to wake him up and they drew the bow of Hari. Here the ants ate up the string of the bow. As a result one end of the string suddenly hit Hari's neck and Hari's head was cut off and went to heaven. Then Brahmā and the other gods asked Viśvakarma to make a new head. They brought the horse's head and transplanted it to the trunk of Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu was pleased and gave the book to all the residents of heaven. The Brāhmaṇas were delighted to have Hayagrīva and they performed a sacrifice.<sup>79</sup>

This myth portrays Hayagrīva's form as benevolent and expounds the origin of his horse headed form. But there is no mention of recovering the Vedas from the demons Madhu Kaitābha or Hayagrīva. The same legend can be found in the *Devībhāgavata*, where Hari lost his head by cutting of a cord. The severed head at once went to the heaven. Then the gods requested Viśvakarman to attach a head to the beheaded body of Hari. Viśvakarman

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<sup>78</sup> *SkP*, 3.14.1-7.

<sup>79</sup> *SkaP*, 3.2.14-15.

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demanded a head to the gods for this purpose and also requested to have a share in Yajña for the job, but the gods could not find Viṣṇu's head. The *Devībhāgavata* mentions the place where Viṣṇu's severed head was found, but this account is absent in the *Skandapurāṇa*. Here, in the *Skandapurāṇa* we find that Viśvakarman found handy horses of the sun and cut off one of the horse's head and joined it very well to the neck of Viṣṇu. Thus Viṣṇu became Hayagrīva. The association of Yajña with Viṣṇu is adorned with epithets like 'Yajñapati', and as the Yajña was over, Viṣṇu-Hayagrīva went to a holy place called *Dharmāraṇya*. This *purāṇa* gives a different reason for the curse on Viṣṇu to lose his head and for becoming the horse-headed god. This is quite different from that of the reason mentioned in the *Devībhāgavata*.

The legends regarding the details of the origin and purpose of the horse-headed form of Viṣṇu appearing in both of the *śākta* and *śaiva purāṇas* namely, *Devībhāgavata* and *Skandapurāṇa*, have slight variations, which is as follows—

- In the *Devībhāgavata*, Devī plays an important role whereas *Skandapurāṇa* mentions that Śiva plays a part in blessing the Horse-headed Viṣṇu for regaining His original head.
  - The word *tvaṣṭrā* is used for the *Viśvakarman* in the *Devībhāgavata* but no such salutation is found in *SkP*. In the *DBh* only a reference of the horse head is given only once. The *Skandapurāṇa* says that it is the head of one of the sun's horses that was cut off and fixed into the beheaded trunk of Viṣṇu which appears to have some link with the Vedic legend of *pravargya*.
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- In both the *purāṇas* termites demanded a share in the sacrifice, whereas in the *SkP* we have seen that *Viśvakarman* also stipulate a share in the sacrifice for the job of fixing the head of Viṣṇu which also reminds us of Vedic god Aśvin brothers.
- The curses of Mahālakṣmi and Brahmā found in the *DBh* and *SkP* respectively are in connection with the origin of the Horse-headed form of Viṣṇu.
- In the *DBh* Viṣṇu-Hayagrīva serves the purpose of killing the demon Hayagrīva, but there is no mention of demon Hayagrīva in the *SkP*.
- In *SkP* the purpose of Viṣṇu's participation in the horse-headed form in the sacrifice is stressed and the legend of Hayagrīva almost ends except for the event of Viṣṇu's regaining his original head by the grace of Lord Śiva in the *Dharmāraṇya*.

From the several myths reflected in different *purāṇas*, a transformation of Hayagrīva through the ages is seen as they adapt from the epic and subsequently change according to the faith of the religious sects. Doniger point out the three phases of the god–demon conflict and claim the similarity between this cycle and the myth of recovery of the Vedas. She discriminates the mythical transformation of Hayagrīva into three phases: a) a divine form, b) a demonic form, and c) a combination of the two.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Nayar, Kamala E: Hayagrīva: *The Many "Histories" of an Indian Deity*, p.91.

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It is noted that the mythical account of Hayagrīva's act of recovering the Vedas from the demons Madhu-Kaiṭabha, may be the beginning of Hayagrīva's history in *vaiṣṇava purāṇas*. Some *vaiṣṇava purāṇas* especially the *BhP*, relates both the divine and demonic myth of Hayagrīva separately. But the *DBh*, the *śākta purāṇa* text, combines both the divine and the demonic Hayagrīva forms in a single myth not describing the role of Hayagrīva as recovering the Vedas. Thus the purāṇic myths of Hayagrīva oftenly undergo some conversion regarding particular context as planned by *purāṇakāras*.

The nature of the sectarian *purāṇas* reveals the affiliation between the different religious streams of India and it is important to note down that the *purāṇas* have different theological and philosophical views. The particular tradition of Hayagrīva myth as shown in the different sectarian *purāṇas*, can have different theological synthesis and significance. Even though, there may be continuation of certain themes and motifs taken in the myth and discontinuance often reflect a different theological and philosophical mould. For instance, there is a reference of divine Hayagrīva in a *vaiṣṇava* text named *Viṣṇupurāṇa* and because of *vaiṣṇava* tradition it is defined as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. It had been theologically and philosophically impossible for the *VP* to hold a description of the completely benign form of Viṣṇu as having a demonic connection or even to accept other demonic horse headed figure. It is noted that according to *vaiṣṇava* theology, Viṣṇu is portrayed as completely benign and absolutely unblemished.<sup>81</sup> The *BhP* another *vaiṣṇava purāṇa* text, which includes the myth of both divine and

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<sup>81</sup> Nayar, Kamala E: Hayagrīva: *ibid.*, p.95.

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demonic Hayagrīva, does not combine both myths. *BhP* does not stick to the unblemished nature of Viṣṇu as in *vaiṣṇava* theology. Moreover *purāṇakāra* simply relates the two different myths without trying a combination. The *BhP* has focused on Viṣṇu and his manifestations, for its *advaitic* orientation.<sup>82</sup> This is why it is not concerned about establishing the unblemished nature of any particular form of Viṣṇu.

On the other hand, *śākta* and *śaiva purāṇa* texts portray Viṣṇu and his incarnations as having negligible importance in the understanding of supreme reality. Thus the contrary descriptions of Hayagrīva are adjacent with the converse nature of Śakti and Śiva. The conjunction of divine and demonic form of Hayagrīva found in the *DBh* and *KāP* respectively glorify Śakti and Śiva. In addition, the conjunction of divine and demonic form of Hayagrīva mentioned in the later *purāṇa* text *DBh*, can justifiably explain the later variation of myth brought into play in order to exhibit sectarian triumph. *BhP* takes a midway by relating instead of integrating the two accounts. Equally *agni* and *Matsya purāṇa* also give a picture of both divine and demonic form of Hayagrīva. These texts include a variety of non- allied subjects that are concerned about Viṣṇu and his incarnations however, their contexts are different.

Moreover, the account of beheading sacrifice mentioned in the Vedic literature resurfaces in two late *purāṇas* like *DBh* and *SkP* and explains how Viṣṇu came to be a horse headed one. Even though Dadhyañc account, described in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, is a footstep towards the origin of

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<sup>82</sup> Nayar, Kamala E: *ibid.*, p.96.

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Hayagrīva, this is not a remarkable trait of Hayagrīva myth. In fact, the beheading and transplantation of Viṣṇu's head with the sacrificial horse that re-appear in these two *purāṇas* is an interpretation for the origin of Hayagrīva. Some scholar believe that significance of the mythical filament of beheading sacrifice that reflected in the Brāhmaṇa texts is sustained in the *śākta* and *śaiva purāṇa* texts.<sup>83</sup> The two myths make no reference of the central *vaiṣṇava* myth of Hayagrīva Viṣṇu, recovering the stolen Vedas from the demon Madhu-Kaiṭabha. It must be emphasised that none of the *vaiṣṇava purāṇas* examined so far, amalgamate the accounts concerning the origin of Hayagrīva. Similar accounts, regarding the origin of Hayagrīva, are found in the *śākta* and *śaiva purāṇa* texts only. Vaiṣṇava tradition would not comprise this trend of explanation about the origin of Hayagrīva. Kamala argues that the origin of Hayagrīva is taken for granted and suggest that in *vaiṣṇava* tradition Hayagrīva is an incarnation of Viṣṇu who appears to this earth for restoring the righteousness at a particular time and thus Viṣṇu's incarnations need no interpretation as to how they obtain their animal heads. In this manner the *vaiṣṇava* myths of Hayagrīva and Nṛsiṃha are related.

The contradiction of Hayagrīva myth in different sectarian texts reflects some important motifs and structural patterns. The structural advancement of Hayagrīva myth is functional in such subtle mythical patterns and cycles.

- ❖ Myths have inconsistency since their outset and pay no attention to their probable versatile development.

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<sup>83</sup> Nayar, Kamala E: Hayagrīva: *ibid.*, p.97.

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- ❖ Assume prologue antecedent back to the Vedas that expound a purely linear comprehending of mythical conversion and ignore other alternatives.
- ❖ Overlook the text context that reveals its theological and philosophical orientation and author's plan.

The variations of a purāṇic myth in many cases reflect the development and evolution of a religious sect and the variant forms of Hayagrīva resulted from the possible religio-historical significance of the religio-sectarian texts. Several *vaiṣṇava purāṇas* contain both divine and demonic descriptions of Hayagrīva, yet none combines the two contradictory figures in a single myth as in the *śākta purāṇa*. In mythology both Matsya and Hayagrīva are associated with the restoration of the Vedas, saving them from the demon Hayagrīva, the composite form of Viṣṇu-Hayagrīva. The *śākta* sectarian text *DBh* appears to combine the divine and demonic Hayagrīva figure in a same myth, whereas in the *vaiṣṇava purāṇas* such contrasting context is absent in the same myth.

From the study of mythology of Hayagrīva found in the different sectarian *purāṇas*, it is observed that addition or omission of events as in a particular set of myths reveal the specific features of each myth that reflect the viewpoint of the *purāṇakāras* and their tradition; and the myth transforms as it is written and adapted to a specific sectarian framework. The purāṇic encyclopaedia contains Hayagrīva in several myths as well as the iconographical description of this deity in certain texts. The description of Hayagrīva's impersonation in the *MBh* might have later developed into the iconographical form.

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3. Iconographical descriptions of Hayagrīva in different *purāṇas*:

Iconography has several integral elements that include the classification of images, textual principle of image making, mode of casting materials employed in image making, the accessories and the characters of gods and goddesses. Iconography a fascinating branch of Indology had its origin in the womb of ancient past. It is a *śāstra* called *śilpaśāstra*, the science of sculpture, as regards Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina vision of iconography. The iconographical details are largely contained in the *Matsya*, *Agni*, *Skanda*, *Garuḍa*, *Līṅga*, *Bhaviṣya* and *Viṣṇupurāṇa* particularly in the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*. These *purāṇas* have contributed a great deal to both temple architecture and iconology. Some of the *purāṇas* in totality constitute an invaluable source for iconographical studies and present detailed description of the activities of the god. Again, some of the *purāṇas* specifically deal with *pratimālakṣaṇa* iconography.

In the long history of art in India, Hayagrīva as a form of Viṣṇu appears in plastic representations not in abundance. The epic and purāṇic literature represented Viṣṇu as an anthropomorphic form along with conventional iconographic character and blazon. Vaiṣṇavisam seems to have been the most popular Hindu sect where Viṣṇu is the Supreme Being alone as the manifestation of the universe. We particularly refer to the iconographical description of Lord Hayagrīva in different purāṇic texts such as, *Agni*, *Garuḍa*, *Viṣṇudharmottara* and *Brahmāṇḍa*, though there are *Āgama*, *Tantra*, *Śilpaśāstra* and other works too.

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- ❖ *The Agnipurāṇa* portrays Hayagrīva featuring with four hands holding discus, mace, conch, and a manuscript. His left leg is placed on the *śeṣanāga* (divine serpent) and the right is on the *kūrma* (tortoise).<sup>84</sup> The *Agnipurāṇa* surprisingly contains fifty chapters on iconography which have been described by Rocher as “a summary of *Pañcarātra Āgamas*. ”<sup>85</sup> Interestingly, the iconographical representation of Hayagrīva in the *Agnipurāṇa* is similar in reference to the *Pañcarātra* texts such as, the *Padma Samhitā*.
- ❖ *The Matsyapurāṇa* supports the description which is reflected in the *Agnipurāṇa*.<sup>86</sup>
- ❖ Even though the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* depicts Hayagrīva, it is slightly different from the description found in the *Agnipurāṇa* and *Matsyapurāṇa*, particularly regarding the arrangement of the objects like conch, discus, rosary and book in the four hands<sup>87</sup> of Hayagrīva.
- ❖ *Garuḍapurāṇa* speaks of *Viṣṇupañjara stotra* where Hayagrīva is described with a white hue like complexion resembling the conch shell, jasmine flower, the moonlight with silver like brilliance. He is

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<sup>84</sup> “Śaṃkha cakṛa gadā vedapāṇiścāśvaśirā hariḥ/  
Vāmapādo dhṛtaḥ śeṣe dakṣiṇaḥ kūrmapṛṣṭhaḥ//  
Dattātreyo dvivāhuḥ syādvāmotsaṅge śriyā saha/  
Viśvakṣenaścakṛa gadā halī śaṅkhī harergaṇaḥ//” *AgniP*, 59.26-27.

<sup>85</sup> Nayar, Kamal. E: *Hayagriva: The Many History of Indian Deity*, p.125.

<sup>86</sup> Babu, Sridhar: *Hayagrīva: The Horse-Headed Deity in Indian Culture*, p. 61.

<sup>87</sup> *BAP*, 4.5.9; 55.35-40.

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four armed holding the conch shell, discus, club and lotus in the arms and adorned with a garland of wild flowers. He has majestic mouth and cheeks, wearing yellow garments.<sup>88</sup>

- ❖ *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* portrayed Hayagrīva as having the face of a horse and eight arms. In four of the hands he carries the conch, discus, mace and lotus and the remaining four hands are placed upon the heads of the personified forms of the four Vedas.<sup>89</sup> His foot rests on

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<sup>88</sup> “Pravakṣyānām hyetadvaiṣṇavaṃ pañjaraṃ śubhaṃ/  
Namo namaste govinda cakraṃ gr̥hya sudarśanaṃ//  
Prācyā rakṣasva mām viṣṇo tvāmahaṃ śaraṇaṃ gataḥ/  
Gadāṃ kaumodakīm gr̥hya padmanābha namohastute/  
Yāmyām rakṣasva mām viṣṇo tvāmahaṃ śaraṇaṃ gataḥ//  
Halamādāya saunandaṃ Namaste puruṣottama/  
Pratīcyām rakṣa mām viṣṇo tvāmahaṃ śaraṇaṃ gataḥ//  
Muṣalaṃ śātanaṃ gr̥hyaṃ puṇḍarikākṣa rakṣa mām/  
Uttarasyām jagannātha bhavantaṃ śaraṇaṃ gataḥ//  
Khaḍgamādāya carmmātha astraśastrādikaṃ hare/  
Namaste rakṣa rakṣogṇa aiśānyām śaraṇaṃ gataḥ//  
Pāñcājanyaṃ mahāśaṅkhamanudvodhaṅca pañkajaṃ/  
Pragr̥hya rakṣa mām viṣṇo āgneyyām yajñaśūkara//  
Candrasūryasamaṃ gr̥hya khaḍgaṃ cāndramasaṃ tathā/  
Nairṛtyām māñca rakṣasva divyamūrtte nṛkeśarin//  
Vaijayantīm sampragr̥hya śrīvatsyaṃ kaṇṭhabhūṣaṇaṃ/  
Vāyavyām rakṣa mām deva Hayagrīva namo'stute//  
Vainateyaṃ samāruhya tvantarīkṣe janārddana/  
Māñca rakṣājīta sadā namaste'stvaparājita//  
Viśālākṣṃ samāruhya rakṣa mām tvam rasātale/  
Akūpāra namastubhyaṃ mahāmīna namo'stute//”*GarP.* 1.13.1-10.

<sup>89</sup> Priyabala, Shah: *Viṣṇodharmottarapurāṇa*, Khaṇḍa III, Vol. I, p. 240.

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the outstretched palms of the goddess earth. This description is somehow different from the description available in other *purāṇas*.

Besides the *purāṇa* text an elaborate description of the iconography of Hayagrīva is from the *Hayaśīrṣa pañcarātra*, an old and paramount literary document of the *pañcarātra* sect of vaiṣṇavism. This text furnishes significant details relating to iconographical features of the deity and architectural norms of temple construction. It comprises of four *kāṇḍas* or volumes such as *Ādi*, *Samkarṣaṇa*, *Laiṅga* and *Saura*. Each of these *kāṇḍas* are divided into sections named *paṭalas*. *Ādi kāṇḍa* of the *Hayaśīrṣa Pañcarātra* expounds on the iconography of three of the five principal Brahmanical divinities— the Viṣṇu, Śiva and Devī. The *Saura kāṇḍa* is a chapter dedicated to the images of Sūrya. *Samkarṣaṇa kāṇḍa* deals with the iconography of Gaṇapati. There are descriptions of Brahmā, grahas, Lokeśas, Garuḍa and it also depicts various forms of the phallic emblem of Śiva and its ingredients.

The first chapter of the *Hayaśīrṣa Pañcarātra* describes Hayaśīrṣa or Hayagrīva as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. In the chapter twenty five Hayagrīva, the horse headed one with four arms is depicted as holding *śaṅkha*, *cakra*, *gadā* and *veda*.<sup>90</sup> Elsewhere he is described as multi-handed. In his eight or

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<sup>90</sup> “Tvam cāpyagre sthitaḥ kāryo vedagrahapuraḥsarah/

Apare vāmahaste tu śaṅkha dadyāt suśobhanam//

Dakṣiṇe dvitaye kuryād gadā cakram vicakṣaṇa/

Śeṣanāgadhṛtaṃ pādaṃ vāmaṃ karyam samānagha//

Dakṣiṇe kurmapṛsthasthaṃ pādaṃ kuryād sadaiva me/

Śaṅkhacakra gadā vedapāṇim vā kārayīt mām//

Aśvavaktraṃ caturbāhumevameva vyavasthitaṃ/

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twelve handed form, he may show other emblems like *padma*, *akṣamālā*, *vara*, *pustaka* etc. However, nothing definite has been said in the text about his standing or seated posture.

Ichnographically Hayagrīva is represented as having a theriomorphic form, an incarnation of Viṣṇu, which has the head of a horse and the body of a man with lustrous white complexion, holding all four attributes in his four hands. When supposed to have eight arms, four are holding the attributes and the other four are holding the Vedas or touching the heads of the personified Vedas. He is supposed to be shown in a brilliant white hue and his clothes as be blue.<sup>91</sup>

#### 4.Mode of worship of Hayagrīva:

Since Hayagrīva rescued the Vedas, the essence of all knowledge, he is worshiped as the god of knowledge and wisdom. As regards the worship of Hayagrīva reflected in the purāṇic literature, some of the purāṇic texts do not refer to the legends describing the origin and victorious achievements of Lord Hayagrīva, but some citations, mentioning the glory of *mantras*, *nyāsa*, *homa*, *pujā* etc., are available. In the purāṇic texts such as the *Viṣṇu*, *Skanda* and *Kālikāpurāṇa* various descriptions of the geographical locations of the Hayagrīva worship are available. In some other *purāṇas* like *Garuda* and *Brahmāṇḍa* there are descriptions of the mode of worship of Hayagrīva. The *Viṣṇupurāṇa* mentions that in the *Bhadrāśva* region Viṣṇu is worshipped as a

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Puṣkarāsanamadhyasthaṃ devīdvitayasamṣṛutaṃ//”*HayaP*, 25.22.25.

<sup>91</sup> T.A, Gopinath Rao: *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, p.261.

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horse headed god.<sup>92</sup> We learn from the *Skandapurāṇa*, that kūrma, a form of Viṣṇu, is the presiding deity of *Bhārata*, as other gods presided over other regions, e.g, Asvaśiras in *Bhadrāśva*, Varāha in *Ketumāla* and Matsya in the north probably *Uttarakuru*.<sup>93</sup> In this context some scholars say, “Hayagrīva was worshipped by *vaḍavā brāhmins* in the *Dharmāraṇya*”<sup>94</sup> along with other deities. We have seen a complete chapter of fifty seven verses where Hari describes “The worship of Hayagrīva.”<sup>95</sup> Here Hayagrīva is described as a generous form of Viṣṇu. Here Hayagrīva is expressed as a presiding deity of learning and wisdom.<sup>96</sup> The chapter discusses about the recitation of the

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<sup>92</sup> *ViP*,2.2. 49-50.

<sup>93</sup> Sridhara, Babu: *Hayagriva the horse headed deity in Indian culture*. p -33.

<sup>94</sup> *Dharmāraṇya* is located near the river *Sabarmati* or ancient *Svabhramati* in the state of Gujrat. The *Dharmāraṇya*, where the horse headed Viṣṇu performed austerities, is also identified as a place in *Sitāpura* district in *Uttarapradesh*. According to this *purāṇa*, the same place became a great pilgrimage because Viṣṇu was relieved of his Horse-head, and where he regained his original head. Although some scholars hold that the story seems to be a later concoction by the *modha Brahmins* to add to the importance of the place of the *Dharmāraṇyakṣetra*.

<sup>95</sup> *GaP*,34.1-57.

<sup>96</sup> “Aumḥ namo Hayaśirase vidyādhyakṣāya vai namaḥ/

Namo vidyāsvarūpāya vidyādātṛe namo namaḥ//

Namaḥ śāntāya devāya namaḥ śāntatarāya ca/

Surāsuranihantṛe ca sarvvaduṣṭavināśine//

Sarvvālokādhipataye brahmarūpāya vai namaḥ/

Namaśceśvaravandyāya śaṅkhacakraharāya ca//

Nama ādhyāya dāntāya sarvvasattvāhitāya ca/

Triguṇyāguṇāyaiva brahmaviṣṇusvarūpiṇe/

Kartṛe hartṛe sureśāya sarvvagāya namo namaḥ//”*ibid.*,34.50-53.

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*mūlamantra* of Hayagrīva.<sup>97</sup> *Nāradaṭpurāṇa* also contains a chapter on the worship of Hayagrīva. A great sage Sanatkumāra describes how the worship is to be performed properly.<sup>98</sup> Here the performance of *homa* is suggested along with the recitation of *mūlamantra*. Moreover, the chapter describes Hayagrīva as the compassionate of speech and prosperity.<sup>99</sup> *Vāmanapurāṇa* gives us another location where Hayagrīva is worshipped. *Vāmanapurāṇa* says that, Hayagrīva is worshipped on the river Kṛṣṇa. This *purāṇa* attributes the name of *Bhadrāśva* to the horse of Viṣṇu, but not to a particular region called *Bhadrāśva*.<sup>100</sup> According to *Kālikāpurāṇa*, *Maṇikūṭa*<sup>101</sup> hill is always associated with the deity Hayagrīva.<sup>102</sup> *Kālikāpurāṇa* a regional *purāṇa*, not only describes the Hayagrīva Mādhava situated in *Manikūṭa* hill of the region *Prāgjyotiṣa Kāmarūpa* but also gives prominence to Hayagrīva as a Hindu-Buddhist god and the worship continues there till date. In the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* Hayagrīva appears to reveal the secret glory of the

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<sup>97</sup> “Dhyayeddhyaṭvārccayedviṣṇuṃ mūlamanṭreṇa śaṅkara/

Tataścāvāhayedrudra devatā āsanasya yāḥ//”

“Vāmanāśaṭputenaiva āgacchantam vicintayet/

Āgacchataḥ prayogeṇa mūlamanṭreṇa śaṅkara//” *ibid.*, 34.15,28.

<sup>98</sup> *NāP*, 3.72.

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*, 3.72.32-36.

<sup>100</sup> *VP*, 36.55.23-25.

<sup>101</sup> The *Maṇikūṭa* is considered holy place by the Buddhists of Tibet and even now Buddhists of the neighbouring Bhutan hills come own in cold season and do worship the god whom they regard as Mahāmuni Buddha. Waddell mentions in his work *Lāmāism* that there is a tradition in Tibet that Buddha had his *parinirvāṇa* in *Kāmarūpa*. But the *Kālikāpurāṇa* and *Yoginī Tantra* make several references to *Maṇikūṭa*.

<sup>102</sup> “Maṇikūṭḥ sthitaḥ pūrve hayagrīvo harirṣataḥ/

Sa Hayagrīvarūpeṇa viṣṇurhatyā jvarāsuram//” *KāP*, 81-75.

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goddess Lalitā with her *mantra*, *nyāsa*, *homa*, *pujā puraścharana* and *sahasranāma* of the Devī, which might be similar to that of the glory of devī in the *Devībhāgavata*'s account.<sup>103</sup> In the dialogue between Hayagrīva and Agyasta, the latter addressed Hayagrīva with appellations like 'aśvānana', 'mahabuddhe', 'sarvaśāstraviśārada' reminding us Hayagrīva's association with learning and wisdom. Here it can be noted that he is worshiped as the god of knowledge and wisdom, both for mastering *parāvidyā* and *aparāvidyā*, having brilliant white colour, clad in white garments, seated on white lotus and always associated with white like Devī Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning and wisdom. The purāṇic story represents the triumph of pure knowledge and bliss, unbound love and compassion for those who contemplate on him. Interestingly, Dakṣiṇāmūrti<sup>104</sup>, the form of Śiva, that is revered by śaivas as the expounder of the śāstras, is equally worshipped with Hayagrīva in both theological and ritual functions.<sup>105</sup> This indicates that one keen on acquiring proficiency on knowledge both secular and spiritual, should worship Hayagrīva *avatāra*.

After a thorough study of the *purāṇa* literature it can be conclusively said that Hayagrīva the horse headed form of Viṣṇu and a minor incarnation is

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<sup>103</sup> Devī here takes the role as revealers of the secret knowledge *Brahmavidyā*, also becomes known as the *Brahmavidyā* itself. This incident exalts the level of Devī over the status of Hayagrīva a typical feature peculiar to the *purāṇas* of sectarian nature.

<sup>104</sup> Dakṣiṇāmūrti may be one of the more important *mūrtis* of Śiva in the south, there are very few references to him in the 'mainstream' in the purāṇic texts. In *Śivapurāṇa* (33.16-17), there is a reference to the worship of Dakṣiṇāmūrti without any details as to his form or role. In the *Nāradapurāṇa* (3.91.127), there is a reference to the Dakṣiṇāmūrti mantra.

<sup>105</sup> Nayar, Kamala E: Hayagrīva: *The Many "Histories" of an Indian Deity*, p.140.

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associated with some aspects of our culture. He is by no means a minor incarnation owing to his popularity. An exploration of the religio-sectarian as well as myths, iconography and the mode of worship of Hayagrīva Viṣṇu reveals the cult of Viṣṇu to be expansive, and the innumerable methods, ways of imagination, belief can create ideas about the Lord, to suit basic requirements and complement to the socio-religious system of the time. To conclude, it can be said that Hayagrīva is all pervading and evident, and different sections of society can be brought together and unified religiously under the influence of all pervasive Viṣṇu.

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## GENEALOGY OF LORD HAYAGRĪVA IN THE PURĀṆĀS

1.	Viṣṇu Purāṇa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ V. Smith: 400-300 BC.</li> <li>➤ M. Winternitz: Probably early 1st millennium.</li> <li>➤ R. C. Hazra: 275-325 A.D.</li> <li>➤ Ramachandra Dikshitar: 700-300 BC.</li> <li>➤ Wendy Doniger: 450 A.D.</li> <li>➤ Rocher states that the “date of the <i>Visnu Purāṇa</i> is as contested as that of any other Purāṇa.”</li> </ul>	Vaiṣṇava	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Hayagrīva as a fourth incarnation of Viṣṇu.</li> <li>❖ Hayagrīva as a demon associate with Naraka and slain by Kṛṣṇa.</li> </ul>
2.	Agni Purāṇa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The earliest core of this Purāṇa is likely from 7th-century 11th-century.</li> <li>➤ P.V. Kane: 900 A.D.</li> <li>➤ R.C. Hazra: 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.</li> <li>➤ Haraprasad Sastri: 800 A.D. - 900A.D</li> </ul>	Vaiṣṇava-Tāntric	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Hayagrīva is the fifth incarnation of Viṣṇu.</li> <li>❖ Hayagrīva as a demon and abductor of the Vedas.</li> <li>❖ Hayagrīva was killed by Viṣṇu in his form of a fish.</li> </ul>
3.	Matsya Purāṇa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Dikshitar: 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D.</li> <li>➤ P.V.Kane: Between 200- 400 A.D.</li> <li>➤ R.C. Hazra: “no one date is sufficient for it.”</li> <li>➤ Wendy Doniger: Have been composed between 250 to 500 CE.</li> </ul>	Vaiṣṇava - Śaiva.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ No explicit description of Hayagrīva as to the form of Viṣṇu.</li> <li>❖ Abduction of the Vedas as well as the slaying of the demon <i>Hayagrīva</i> is also absent.</li> <li>❖ Matsya himself says that in a great deluge, in the form of a horse, he recompiled the Vedas and Vedāṅgas.</li> </ul>
4.	Bhāgavata Purāṇa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ R. C Hazra: Around 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> century AD.</li> <li>➤ Dikshitar, Tagre</li> </ul>	Vaiṣṇava	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Viṣṇu appears horse-headed form in two individual although inter-related aspects, as</li> </ul>

**TABLE 1: 148**

**GENEALOGY OF LORD HAYAGRĪVA IN THE PURĀṆĀS**

		<p>considering Bhāgavata to be one of the most ancient of the purāṇas and similar to be the religion of Guptas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Winternitz: 12<sup>th</sup> Century.</li> <li>➤ H.H. Wilson, Colcbrookc &amp; Colinder: 13<sup>th</sup> Century.</li> </ul>		<p>promulgator and protector of the Vedas, and as the cosmic sacrifice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Hayagrīva is mentioned in several avatāric lists of Viṣṇu.</li> <li>❖ Hayagrīva is depicted as a demon that is killed by Viṣṇu.</li> </ul>
5.	Garuḍa Purāṇa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Chaudhuri, Banerjee, and Hazra: It cannot be from before about the 10th- or 11th-century A.D.</li> <li>➤ Haraprasad Sastri dates the Purāṇa in the time of the Guptas.</li> </ul>	Vaiṣṇava	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Hayaśīras expressed as a presiding deity of learning and wisdom.</li> <li>❖ Hayagrīva is described like a generous form of Viṣṇu.</li> <li>❖ Iconography and worship of Hayagrīva</li> </ul>
6.	Vāmana Purāṇa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The first version of this purāṇa was probably created by the 9<sup>th</sup>-11th century A.D.</li> </ul>	Vaiṣṇava-Śaiva	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Hayaśīrṣa is mainly as the third incarnation of Viṣṇu.</li> <li>❖ No incarnation after Vāmana is mentioned in the text.</li> </ul>
7.	Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ludo Rocher: 1000 A.D.</li> <li>➤ Wendy Doniger: Between 4th - 10th centuries A.D.</li> <li>➤ Dikshitar: 4th-century BC.</li> </ul>	Śākta-Tāntric	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Absence of any traditional reference or account describing the origin and conquering attainments of Hayagrīva.</li> <li>❖ Hayagrīva come into view as the revealers of the secret glory of Goddess lalitā to the sage Agyasta.</li> <li>❖ Hayagrīva is to glorify the mother goddess Lalitā.</li> </ul>

## GENEALOGY OF LORD HAYAGRĪVA IN THE PURĀṆĀS

8.	Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ R. C. Hazra: 11th or 12th century,</li> <li>➤ Lalye: Its first complete version existed in the 11th century.</li> </ul>	Śākta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Origin of horse headed form based upon Vedic interpretation.</li> <li>❖ Narrative of Hayagrīva with the explanation of how Lord Viṣṇu lost his head and obtained horse's head by the grace of Mahāmāya.</li> <li>❖ Combines the accounts about the divine and demonic figure of Hayagrīva with the idea of "Hayagrīva kills Hayagrīva."</li> </ul>
9.	Viṣṇu Dharmottara purāṇa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Stella Kramrisch: cannot be earlier than the 2nd half of the 4th century A.D- 7th century A.D.</li> </ul>	Vaiṣṇava	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Hayagrīva is an emanation form of the Vyūha Saṃkarṣana.</li> <li>❖ The avatāric movement of Viṣṇu Hayagrīva recovering the Vedas from the two demons in ancient times.</li> </ul>
10.	Brahma purāṇa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century</li> </ul>	Vaiṣṇava	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Lists several asuras including Hayagrīva that Kṛṣṇa has killed.</li> </ul>
11.	Kālikā purāṇa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century</li> </ul>	Śākta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Lord Viṣṇu in his Hayagrīva form killed the fever demon Jvarāsura and stayed at Manikūṭa hill for the good of all men.</li> <li>❖ Hayagrīva is portrayed as a demon figure that is killed by jagatpatiḥ.</li> <li>❖ Hayagrīva mantra and</li> </ul>

**TABLE 1:** 150

**GENEALOGY OF LORD HAYAGRĪVA IN THE PURĀṆĀS**

				tantra which is an association of Hayagrīva with Garuḍa in the Vaiṣṇava tradition.
12.	Skanda purāṇa	➤ Haraprasad Sastri and Bendall discovered an old manuscript of Skanda Purana in the Durbar library of Kathmandu, Nepal, written in Gupta script.	Śaiva	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Skanda purāṇa characterizes Hayagrīva as a philanthropic character.</li> <li>❖ This purāṇa also explains the origin of horse head based on the Vedic myth of the beheading sacrifice.</li> </ul>

# CHAPTER V: HAYAGRĪVA IN THE DEVĪBHĀGAVATA





*Devībhāgavata*, a *purāṇa* classified under the *śākta*<sup>1</sup> variety, considers the goddess Śakti<sup>2</sup> as higher than the highest and the cause of the causes. Everything in the world is under the sway of the great goddess Śakti<sup>3</sup>. She is the primordial creator of the universe and the Brahman, the ultimate truth and reality. Here Devī herself is the power which pervades the whole universe and from which the universe is emanated.

Many *purāṇas* glorify the supreme power<sup>4</sup> Śakti or māyā, by the grace of which Śiva and Viṣṇu became the supreme gods. Intimate to the purāṇic age veneration to the Śakti was considered to be more benign than the devotion to its dwellers. This change appears to be due to the growth of tāntrik order. The earliest reference to Śakti is in the *Vāgambhṛṇī Sūkta* of the *Ṛgveda*.<sup>5</sup> Here we

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<sup>1</sup> The follower of Śaktism, the worshipper of Śakti is called *Śākta*.

<sup>2</sup> The word Śakti means the ‘power’ both dormant and manifested. When personilised it means the Devī of power, she is Deva. The Śakti is the power of the supreme spirit. The expression Śaktisam is derived from the word Śakti. The doctrines of Śaktism are contained in a special branch of the Holy Scriptures called *Tantra śāstra*, which acknowledges the authority of the Veda. Kapoor, Subodh: *Short Introduction to Śākta Philosophy*. p.3.

<sup>3</sup> “Ekārṇavasya salilaṃ rasarūpameva, pātraṃ vinā na hi rasasthitirasti kaccit/  
Yā sarvvabhūtaviṣaye kila śaktirūpā, tāṃ sarvvabhūtajananīm śaraṇaṃ gato’smi//” *DBh*, 1.2.8.

<sup>4</sup> Today the western science considers energy as the physical ultimate of all forms of matter. So has it been for ages to the *śāktas*, the worshippers of Śakti. But they add that such energy is only a limited manifestation as mind and matter of becoming in that (Tat), which is unitary being (Sat) itself. Woodroffe, Sir John: *Śakti and Śākta; Essays and Addresses in the Śāktatantraśāstra*. Ulthar: Celephais Press, 2009. p.25.

<sup>5</sup> “Ahaṃ rudrebhīrvasūbhiścarāmyahamādityairuta viśvadevaiḥ/  
Ahaṃ mitrāvarunobhā bibharmyahanindrāgnī ahamaśvinobhā//

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find the earliest glimpse of the omnipotent female deity called 'vāk'. Around the Śakti numerous mythologies grew up resulting in the emergence of the purāṇa designated as *DBh*. Devī also called as *Bhagavatī*, adapted the Vedic concept of *Bhaga*, representing energy and another aspect of *ṛta*.<sup>6</sup>

Certain features of the *Śākta purāṇa*<sup>7</sup> have been reflected in the major myth of Hayagrīva which are not available elsewhere. Moreover, the sectarian features of the *Śākta purāṇa* have been well represented in the mythological narrative. This accords special treatment to this *purāṇa* so much so as to consider it as a chapter separated from the other *purāṇas*. *Śākta* is a sectarian branch of Hinduism based on worship of the supreme principle as a female force Śakti or

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Ahaṃ somamāhanasaṃ bibharmiyahaṃ tvaṣṭāramuta pūṣaṇaṃ bhagaṃ/  
 Ahaṃ dadhāmi draviṇaṃ haviṣmate suprāvyē<sup>3</sup> Yajamānāya sunvante//  
 Ahaṃ rāṣṭī saṅgamanī vasudhā cikituṣī prthamā yajñiyānām/  
 Taṃ mā devā vyadadhuḥ purutrā bhūristhātrām bhūryaviśayantīm//  
 Mayā so annamatti yo vipaśyati yaḥ prāṇiti yo im śṛṇotyuktaṃ/  
 Amamtavo mām tau pa kṣiyanti śrudhi śruta śraddhivaṃ te vadāmi//  
 Ahameva svayamidam vadāmi juṣṭam devabhiḥ uta mānuṣebhiḥ/  
 Yaṃ kāmāye taṃ taṃ ugraṃ kṛṇomi taṃ brahmāṇaṃ taṃ ṛṣiṃ taṃ sumedhām//  
 Ahaṃ rudrāya dhanurātānami brahmadviṣe śarave hantavā/  
 Ahaṃ janāya samadam kṛṇomyahaṃ dyāvā pṛthivī ā viveśa//  
 Ahaṃ suve pitaramasyaṃ mūrdham mama yonirapsva<sup>1</sup>ntaḥ samudre/  
 Tato vī tiṣṭhe bhīvanānu viśvotāmūṃ dyām varṣmaṇopa sprśāmi//  
 Ahameva vātaiva pra vāmyarabhamāṇā bhūvanāni viśvā/  
 Paro divā paro enā pṛthivaitāvatī mahinā saṃ babhūva//”*RV*, 10.125.1-8.

<sup>6</sup> The word *ṛta* conveys the meaning of a cosmic order or regulating principle. P.V. Kane says that the word *ṛta* has got three meanings in the *R̥gveda*: a) The regular and general order in the cosmos. b) The correct and ordered way to cult of the God. c) Moral conduct of the men. Kane, P.V: *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Vol V, Part 2, p.988.

<sup>7</sup> Bhattāchārya, Viman Chandra: *Samskṛta Sāhityer rūparekhā*, pp.56-57.

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Devī. The theosophy of *DBh* is a combination of the doctrine of *bhakti* and *tantra* linked by religion and philosophy and depicted as a mix of mythology, metaphysics and *bhakti*. Like other *purāṇas* this myth signifies conflict between gods and demons and the victory of good over evil.

Lord Viṣṇu a prominent, independent deity in the purāṇic age is eulogized in the *Bhāgavata* and also in the *DBh purāṇa*. Hayagrīva, a combination of human and animal, incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu, is known by mythological narratives in the *MBh* and the *purāṇas* that are valuable in regard to the origin and extent of the Hayagrīva concept and cult in ancient India. In the *DBh*, the story of Viṣṇu-Hayagrīva is the major mythological narrative about the purāṇic god. The narrative includes the details of Viṣṇu obtaining a horse head based on the later Vedic myths of *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*<sup>8</sup> and the divine and demonic descriptions of two Hayagrīvas— one the malevolent demon Hayagrīva and the other benevolent Viṣṇu-Hayagrīva. The fifth chapter of the first *skandha* named “*Hayagrīvāvatārakathanam*” of the *Devībhāgavata* mentions important theme of the story which is further developed throughout the *purāṇa*.

Before entering in the major myth of Hayagrīva in the fifth chapter of the first *skandha* of the *DBh*, we find some important themes regarding our study in connection with the excellence of Devī from the previous chapter of the same *skandha*. Here Nārada told Sūta that Lord Brahmā had earlier mentioned to him that Viṣṇu himself is the embodiment of the universe and it was from him that Brahmā and Rudra took their origin. Yet Lord Viṣṇu had revealed the central importance of the divine Śakti who has been the driving force of divine Brahma’s work of creation, Viṣṇu’s work of

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<sup>8</sup> *ŚB*, 14.1.1.1-17.

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sustenance and Rudra's destruction of the universe. Viṣṇu restates that he is subservient to *Devī-Bhagavatī* and is always in her meditation, but at the same time enjoys freedom to possess the company of goddess Lakṣmī, to slay the demons Madhu-Kaiṭabha, to incarnate himself in various forms and features some times as *Daśāvatāra*, sometimes as Mohinī and so on. But his activities are always remote controlled and oriented to protect the virtues and punish the evil. Thus Viṣṇu is indeed the highest representative of Devī with full freedom to enact his own within the frame work of her supreme control.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> “Tacchrutvā vacanaṃ tasya harirāha prajāpatiṃ/  
Śṛṇuṣvaikamaṇā brahmaṃstvām brabīmi manogataṃ//  
Yadyapi tvām śivaṃ māñca sthitisṛṣṭantakāraṇām/  
Te jānanti janāḥ sarvve sadevāsuramānuṣā//  
Sraṣṭā tvam pālakaścāham haraḥ saṃhārakāraḥ/  
Kṛtāḥ śaktyeti santarkaḥ kriyate vedapāragaiḥ//  
Jagat sañjanane śaktistvayi tiṣṭhati rājasī/  
Sātvikī mayi rudre ca tāmasī parikīrtitā//  
Tayā virahitastvam na tat karmmakaraṇe prabhuḥ/  
Nāham pālayitum śaktaḥ saṃharttum nāpi śaṅkaraḥ//  
Tadadhīnā vayam sarvve varttāmaḥ satataṃ bibhoḥ/  
pratyakṣe ca parokṣe ca drṣṭāntaṃ śṛṇu subrata//  
Śeṣe svapimi paryyañke paratantro na saṃśayaḥ/  
Tadadhīnaḥ sadottiṣṭhe kāle kālavaśaṃ gataḥ//  
Tapaśarāmi satataṃ tadadhīno 'hasmyaham sadā/  
Kadācit saha lakṣmyā ca viharāmi yathāsukhaṃ//  
Kadāciddānavaiḥ sārddham saṃgrāmaṃ prakaromyaham/  
Dāruṇaṃ dehadamaṇaṃ sarvvalokabhayaṅkaraṃ//  
Pratyakṣaṃ tava dharmajña tasminnekārṇave purā/  
Pañcavarṣasahasrāṇi vāhuyuddhaṃ mayā kṛtaṃ//  
Tau karṇamalajau duṣṭau dānavau madagarvvitau/  
Devadevyāḥ prasāden nihatau madhukaiṭabhau//

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Moreover, Brahmā quotes that Viṣṇu's speech—

“Purā purastehaja śiro madīyaṃ, gataṃ dhanurjyāskhalanāt kva cāpi/  
Tvayā tadā vājīśiro grhītvā, saṃyojitaṃ, śilpivareṇa bhūyaḥ//  
Hayānana'haṃ parikīrtitaśca, pratyakṣametattava lokakarttaḥ/  
Viḍmvaneyaṃ kila lokamadhye, kathaṃ bhavedātmaparo yadi  
syāṃ//

Tasmānnāhaṃ svatantrosmi śktyadhīno'smi sarvvathā/  
Tāmeva śktiṃ satataṃ dhyāyāmi ca nirantaram//  
Nātaḥ parataram kiñcijjānāmi kamaloDBhava//”<sup>10</sup>

Long ago my head was cut off when the bowstring suddenly gave way; and then you, brought a horse's head and by the help of Viśvakarmā, affixed that on my headless body. O Brahmā! Since then I am known amongst men by the name of “Hayagrīva”. Therefore I am not independent. I am in every way under that Śakti. O Lotus-born! I always meditate on that Śakti; and I do not know any other thing than this Śakti.

The fifth chapter of the first *skandha* named “*Hayagrīvāvatāarakathanam*” begins with the source of slaying the demons Madhu-Kaiṭabha by Viṣṇu and also gives detailed description of how the beheading of Viṣṇu took place and

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Tadā tvayā na kiṃ jñātaṃ kāraṇastu parātparam/  
Śaktirūpaṃ mahābhāga kiṃ prcchasi punaḥ punaḥ//  
Yadicchā puruṣo bhūtvā vicarāmi mahāhave/  
Kacchapaḥ kolasiṃhasya vāmanaśca yuge yuge//  
Na kasyāpi priyo loke tiryyagyoniṣu sambhavaḥ/  
Nābhavat svecchayā vāmavarāhādiṣu yoniṣu//”DBh, 1.4.44-57.

<sup>10</sup> DBh, 1.4.59-61.

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he assumed form of a horse headed one and the reason behind it as mentioned in the previous chapter.

The preface of the account of omnipotent Mādhava's severed head, surfacing in the fourth chapter of the first *skandha* was developed in the fifth chapter.

The chapter begins with these words—

“Sūtāsmākaṃ manaḥ kāmam magnaṃ saṃśayasāgare/  
Yathoktaṃ mahadāścaryaḥ jagadvismayakāraṇam//  
Yanmūrdhā mādhasyāpi gato dehat punaḥ param/  
Hayagrīvostato jāto sarvvakartā janārdanaḥ//  
Vede'pi stauti yaṃ devaṃ devāḥ sarvve yadāśrayāḥ/  
Ādidevo jagannāthaḥ sarvvakāraṇakāraṇaḥ//  
Tasyāpi vadaṇam chinnaṃ divayogāt katham tadā/  
Taṃ sarvam kathayāsu tvaṃ viatareṇa mahāmate//”<sup>11</sup>

The sages were feeling suspicion and they became curious to know the weirdest occurrence of the severed head of Janārdana Mādhava. Then *sūta* narrates the important myth about Hayagrīva. The legend begins as to how, after a prolonged fight for thousands of years with the demons, Mahāviṣṇu desired to take rest and due to his weariness caused by the influence of fate, he got addicted to excessive slumber, ‘*atinidritāḥ*’—

“Kadāciddāruṇam yuddham kṛtvā devaḥ sanātanaḥ/  
Daśavarṣasahasrāṇi pariśrānto janārdanaḥ//  
Same deśeśubhe sthāne kṛtvā padmāsanam vibhuḥ/  
Avalambya dhanuḥ sajam kaṇṭhadeśe dharāsthitaṃ//  
Dattvā bhāram dhanuḥkoṭyāṃ nidrāmāpa ramāpatiḥ/  
Śrāntatvādaivayogācca jātastatrātinidritaḥ//”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *DBh*, 1.5.1-4.

That was the time when gods were preparing to perform a sacrifice, and as Mahāviṣṇu was - ‘*makhānāmadhipaṃ prabhum*’,<sup>13</sup> Brahmā and others went to *vaikuṇṭha* to invite him. But they failed to find him and discovered Viṣṇu completely under the control of *yoganidrā*, unconscious, and paralyzed in sleep.<sup>14</sup> The gods were worried. Then Brahmā had a plan. Accordingly he created termites and ordered them to eat off the ends of a drawn bow that would cause the bow to spring open with a tremendous noise to wake up Viṣṇu. The termites (*vamrī*) argued that the benefit of awakening Lord Viṣṇu from deep sleep would go only to the gods, while the sin of awakening a sleeping person would fall upon them.<sup>15</sup> The *vamrī* initially refused and listed

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<sup>12</sup> *DBh*, 1.5.6-8.

<sup>13</sup> Viṣṇu is identified with Makha or Yajña—‘*Yajña vai Viṣṇu*’. In different Vedic texts we come across a story regarding the loss of Yajña-Viṣṇu’s head and its replacement done by Aśvin.

<sup>14</sup> “Tadā kālena kiyatā devāḥ sarvve savāsavāḥ/  
Brahmeśasahitāḥ sarvve yajñaṃ karttum samudyatāḥ//  
Gatāḥ sarvve’ta vaikuṇṭhaṃ draṣṭum devaṃ janārdanaṃ/  
Devakāryyārthsiddhārthaṃ makhānāmadhipaṃ prabhum//  
Adṛṣtvā taṃ tadā tatra jñāna dṛṣṭyā vilokya te/  
Yatrāste bhagavān viṣṇurjagmustatra tadā surāḥ//  
Dadṛṣuste tadeśānāṃ yoganidrāvaśaṃ gataṃ/  
Vicetanaṃ vibhuṃ viṣṇuṃ tatrāsāñcakrire surāḥ//” *DBh*, 1.5.12.

<sup>15</sup> “Sthiteṣu sarvvadeveṣu nidrāsupte jagatpatau/  
Cintāmāpuḥ surāḥ sarvve brahmarudrapurogamāḥ//  
Tānuvāca tataḥ śkraḥ kiṃ kartavyaṃ surottamāḥ/  
nidrābhaṅgaḥ kathaṃ kāryyaścintayantu surottamāḥ//  
Tamuvāca tadā śambhurnidrābhaṅge’si dūṣaṇaṃ/  
Kāryyañcaiva prakarttavyaṃ yajñasya surasattamāḥ//  
Utpādita tadā vamrī brahmaṇā parameṣṭhinā/  
Tayā bhakṣayitum tatra dhanuṣo’graṃ dharāsthitaṃ//

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waking up someone from deep sleep as the sin was equating to *Brahmahatyā*

“Nidrābhaṅgaḥ kathācchedo dāmpatyoh prītibhedanam/  
Śiśumātrvibhedaśca brahmahatyāsamam smṛtam//  
Taṁ katham devadevasya karomi sukhanāśanam/  
Kiṁ phalam bhakṣanāddeva yena pāpam karomyaḥam//”<sup>16</sup>

Thus through the medium of *vaṁrī* we are taught some ethics. According to them, four acts of arousing one from deep sleep, interrupting ones speech, severing the love between a couple and separating a child from its mother are considered equal to *Brahmahatyā*.

Yet the *vaṁrī* were ready to incur the sin in return of some personal benefit.<sup>17</sup> Brahmā promised that a part of the benefit of the sacrifice (*makha*) shall go to the termite—

“Tava bhāgaṁ kariṣyāmo makhamadhye yathā śṛṇu/  
Tena tvaṁ kuru kāryyaṁ no viṣṇuṁ bodhaya mā ciraṁ//  
Homakarmmaṇi pārśve ca havirddānāt patiṣyati/  
Taṁ te bhāgaṁ vijānīhi kuru kāryyaṁ tvarāṇvitā//”<sup>18</sup>

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Bhakṣite’gre tadā nimnam gamiṣyati śarāsanam/  
Tadā nidrāvimukto’sau devadevo bhaviṣyati//  
Devakāryyaṁ tadā sarvvaṁ bhaviṣyati na saṁśayaḥ/  
Sa varmīṁ sandideśātha devadevaḥ sanātanaḥ//  
Tamuvāca tadā vaṁrī devadevasya māpateḥ/  
Nidrābhaṅgaḥ katham kāryyo devasya jagatām guroḥ//”*ibid.*, 1.5.13-19.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, 1.5.20-21.

<sup>17</sup> “Sarvvaṁ svārthavaśo lokaḥ kurute pātakam kila/

Tasmādahaṁ kariṣyāmi svārthameva prabhakṣaṇam//”*ibid.*, 1.5.22.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, 1.5.23-24.

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The promise of Brahmā pleased the termites and they did their entrusted job, they at once chewed through the bow tip of Viṣṇu, the upper arm of the bow rose up with a tremendous sound. The explosion terrified the gods, the universe was shocked, the earth trembled, the oceans overflowed with waves and the marine animals became shocked, wind blew drastically, the mountains quaked, fell ominous meteorites. The quarters assumed terrific gesture; the sun went down the horizon, *devas* became anxious what evil might come down. Then by the stroke of the sharp end of the bowstring the head of Viṣṇu cut off the trunk and it rose high up into the sky—

“Ityuktā brahmaṇā vamrī dhanuṣo’graṃ tvarāṇvitā  
Cakhāda saṃsthitam bhūmau vimuktā jyā tadābhavat//  
Pratyāñcāyāṃ vimuktāyāṃ muktā koṭistathottarā/  
Śabdaḥ samabhadghorastena trastāḥ surāstadā//  
Brahmāṇḍam kṣubhitam sarvvaṃ vasudhā kampitā tadā/  
Samudrāśca samudvignāstresuśca jalajantavaḥ//  
Bavurvātāstathā cogrāḥ parvvatāśca cakampire/  
Ulkāpātā mahotpātā vabhurvurduḥkhaśaṃsinaḥ//  
Diśo ghoratarāścāsan sūryyo’pyastaṃgato’abhavat/  
Cintāmāpuḥ surāḥ sarvve kiṃ bhaviṣyati durddine//  
Evaṃ cintayatām teṣāṃ mūrddhā viṣṇoḥ sakuṇḍalaḥ/  
Gataḥ samukuṭaḥ kvāpi devadevasya tāpasāḥ//”<sup>19</sup>

To the story of Viṣṇu’s beheading when the awful darkness subsided, Brahmā and Śiva made out the disfiguring body of Viṣṇu. Astonished at the unexpected outcome, the gods wondered—“*Māyeyaṃ kasya devasya yayā*

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<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, 1.5.25-30.

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*te'adya śiro hr̥tam.*"<sup>20</sup> Māyā is personified as a goddess who is under the control of Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu is repeatedly mentioned to as *māyeśa*, but in the description of *Devībhāgavata*'s Māyā set up as the goddess ultimately responsible for the dreadful occurrence i.e., the decapitation of the supreme Lord. Moreover, she also knows how to restore Viṣṇu's head.

Seeing the beheaded *kabandha*, the gods were surprised and wondering, overwhelmed with grief and began to weep loudly—

“Andhakāre tadā ghore śānte brahmaharau tadā/  
Śirohīnaṃ śarīrantu dadṛśāte vilakṣaṇaṃ//  
Dṛṣṭvā kabandhaṃ viṣṇoste vismitāḥ surasattamāḥ/  
Cintāsāgaramagnāśca ruruduḥ śokakarṣitāḥ//  
Hā nātha kiṃ prabho jātamatyaDBhutamamānuṣaṃ/  
Vaiśasaṃ sarvadevānāṃ devadeva sanātana//  
Māyeyaṃ kasya devasya yayā tehadya śiro hr̥tam/  
Acchedyastvamabhedhyo'si apradāhyo'si sarvadā//”<sup>21</sup>

*Devas* got afflicted as they realized themselves responsible for the beheading of the Lord.<sup>22</sup> It seems as grim and strange, yet has been introduced in a

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<sup>20</sup> *DBh*, 1.5.34.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, 1.5.31-34.

<sup>22</sup> “Evaṃ gate tvayi vibho mariṣyanti ca devatāḥ/  
Kīdṛśastvayi naḥ snehaḥ svārthenaiva rudāmahe//  
Nāyaṃ vidhnaḥ kṛto daityairna yakṣairna ca rākṣasaiḥ/  
Devaireva kr̥th kasya dusananca ramapate//  
Parādhīnāḥ surāḥ sarvve kiṃ kurmmaḥ kva vrajāma ca/  
Śaraṇaṃ naiva deveśa surāṇāṃ mūḍhacetasām//  
Na caiśā sāttvikī māyā rājasī na ca tāmasī/  
Yayā chinnaṃ śiraste'dya māyeśasya jagadguruḥ//”*ibid.*, 1.5.35-38.

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dramatic presentation. According to *Nāṭyaśāstra*, *rasa* is a synthetic phenomenon and also the aim of any form of creative activity art, rhetoric, imagery or literature. Wallace Dace translates *rasa* in accordance with its explanation in ancient text “a relish that of an elemental human emotion like love, pity, fear, heroism or mystery, which forms the dominant note of a dramatic piece; this dominant emotion, as tasted by the audience, has a different quality from that which is aroused in real life; *rasa* may be said to be the original emotion transfigured by aesthetic delight.”<sup>23</sup>

Here we can see that the incident of Lord Viṣṇu’s beheading was conducting the sentiment of pathos and weird and gods were submerged in it. Then Bṛhaspati enlightened Indra, Brahmā and Śiva, encourage them to overcome this critical condition.<sup>24</sup>

They quickly evolved into a debate over the relative strength of fate versus human efforts.<sup>25</sup> Bṛhaspati advised *devas* with these words—

“Daivam puruṣakāraśca deveśa sadṛśāvubhau/  
Upāyaśca vidhātavyo daivāt phalati sarvathā//”<sup>26</sup>

Fate, one’s own effort and intelligence are equivalent. If one does not get success through Fate, then success can be obtained through one’s efforts and merit. Indra, despised effort and intellect upon apprehending the miserable incident of Viṣṇu’s severed head. He opined the supremacy of Fate —

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<sup>23</sup> Perrett, Roy W: *Theory of Value: Indian Philosophy*, p.155.

<sup>24</sup> “Ruditenā mahābhāgāḥ kranditenā tathāpi kiṃ/

Upāyaścātra karttavyaḥ sarvvathā buddhigocaraḥ//”*DBh*, 1.5.40.

<sup>25</sup> Brown. C. Mackenzie: *The Triumph of the Goddess*, p.41.

<sup>26</sup> *DBh*, 1.5.41.

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“Daivameva param manye dhik pauruṣamanarthakaṃ/  
Viṣṇorapi śiraśchinnaṃ surāṇāñcaiva paśyatām//”<sup>27</sup>

To side with the fate, Brahmā then argued that every embodied being must experience pain and pleasure, and also gave some examples of physical calamity that had concerned even gods themselves. His own head, through the force of time, was once cut off by Śiva; Śiva’s penis fell off through a curse; and Indra’s body had had a thousand vulvas imprinted on it. Similarly, now Viṣṇu’s head fall into the salt ocean—

“Avaśyameva bhoktavyaṃ kālenāpāditañca yat/  
Śubhaṃ vāpyaśubhaṃ vāpi daivaṃ ko’tikramet punaḥ//  
Dehavān sukhaduḥkhānāṃ bhoktā naivātra saṃśayaḥ/  
Yathā kālavaśāt kṛtaṃ śiro me śambhunā purā//  
Tathaiva liṅgapātaśca mahādevasya śāpataḥ/  
Tataivādya harermūrdhā patito labhañāmbhasi//  
Sahasrabhagasamprāptirduḥkhañcaiva śacīpateḥ/  
SvargāDBhramśastathā vāsaḥ kamale mānase sare//  
Ete duḥkhasya bhoktāraḥ kena duḥkhaṃ na bhujoyate/  
Saṃsāre’smin mahābhāgāstasmācchokaṃ tyajantu vai//”<sup>28</sup>

Interestingly this theme regarding fate or *daivaṃ* and prowess or *puruṣakāra* may have developed in the third *skandha* of the *Devībhāgavata* where it is mentioned —

“the whole world movable and unmovable, is under the control of fate  
‘*daivadhīnamidaṃ*’ ... everyone is under the effect of one’s own

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<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, 1.5.42.

<sup>28</sup> *DBh.*, 1.5.43-47.

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deeds....*karma* is of three kinds, accumulated, present and *prārabdha*.  
This whole world is in action due to *kāla*, *karma*, and *svabhāva*.”

*DBh purāṇa* has a tendency to use certain terms loosely and interchangeably.<sup>29</sup> It’s a matter of interest that in the fifth chapter of the first *skandha* where the sages enquire to *sūta* as to how Viṣṇu lost his head through the power of fate or *daivayogāt*, a phrase commented by Nīlakaṇṭha as through the power of *prārabdha karma* or *prārabdhayogat*.

The fidelity of human efforts over fate has been stated several times in the *purāṇas* and *itihāsas*. The conception and conviction in fate is a later notion of Indian ethos. Fate is not mentioned in the *Samhitās*, the *Āraṇyakas*, the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Upaniṣads*. In the *Ṛgveda*, benevolent gods were eulogised passionately for the grant of prosperity in material gains like wealth, crop and cattle and to be favoured with many sons. However, the concept of fate and fatalism had eminence quite late during the epics and the *purāṇas*.

There are sermons that accept the domina of fate as one which could not be gripped by reflection, as one that cannot be destroyed.”<sup>30</sup> There are also greatly accounts appreciating brave human efforts or *puruṣakāra* or *puruṣa-prayatna* that criticize subjectivity of fate as ‘false-games that people play and delude themselves,’ when one fails to lead a graceful life depending on fate and ends in a hapless condition.<sup>31</sup> It also appears that lower men

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<sup>29</sup> Brown. C. Mackenzie: *Op. Cit.*, p.249.

<sup>30</sup> *Rām*, 2.20.20.

<sup>31</sup> *Mbh*, 8.6.20.

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engrossed in worldly pleasures blame the fate for their wicked deeds.<sup>32</sup> According to *MBh*, an enterprising man must perform every action fearlessly, however, its success is based upon fate.<sup>33</sup> As a lamp burns bleak as the oil falls short, so the fate becomes feeble when fruit of action is worn out.<sup>34</sup>

The *purāṇas* were primarily composed to venerate the authority, magnificence and superiority of their major gods and goddesses. They persuade the devotees to submit to the will and sympathy of the deities. But, at the same time they insist men not to abandon their hard work: “Some wise men call fate as the false hope that weak adhere to. For the powerful men no fate is ever noticed. The heroic and the feeble take recourse to effort and fate respectively.”<sup>35</sup> The wise belief that ability is foremost, even a hostile destiny can be prevailed over by the ability of unfailing dedication and upright action.<sup>36</sup>

After the controversial debate regarding the relative strength of fate versus human effort, Brahmā then ordered the Vedas to eulogise Devī in the form of Mahāmāyā for solving this problem;<sup>37</sup> the Devī, whom Brahmā refers to as *Brahmavidyā*. Then the Vedas made an intense appeal to Mahādevī Bhagavatī, the eternal cause of causes, the very central power, the vital force

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<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, 8.67.1.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, 8.1.47.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, 8.6.44.

<sup>35</sup> *DBh*. 5.12.28-30.

<sup>36</sup> *MatP*, 195.

<sup>37</sup> “Stuvantu paramāṃ devīm brahmavidyām sanātanīm/  
Gūḍhāṅgiṇca mahāmāyām sarvvakāryyārthasāadhanīm//” *DBh*, 1.5.51.

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of entire creation, the *vindu* of *praṇava*, the sourcing fountain of knowledge and above all, the embodiment of beneficence and forgiveness —

“Brahmavidyāṃ jagaddhātrīm sarveṣāṃ jananīm tathā/  
Yayā sarvvamidam vyāptaṃ trailokaṃ sacarācaram//”<sup>38</sup>

The *nirguṇa maheśvarī devī-mahāmāyā* became gratified on being eulogized by the Vedas with *sāmagāna*. Devī later on told *devas* about the reason behind Viṣṇu’s beheading. Because nothing in this world take place without any cause—

“Śṛnvantu kāraṇaṅcādyā yadgataṃ vadanam hareḥ/  
Akāraṇam katham kāryam saṃsāre’ta bhaviṣyati//”<sup>39</sup>

Regarding the beheading of Lord Viṣṇu, Devī provides two basic reasons. The first one concerns the curse given by Mahālakṣmī as the cause for the event.

Once Viṣṇu was looking at her beautiful face and smiled without reason. Mahālakṣmī thought that Viṣṇu had chosen another fair-complexioned woman to be a co-wife. She got angry and cursed Viṣṇu that his head should be severed from his body—‘*Idam patatu te śiraḥ*’.<sup>40</sup> Brown thinks that this curse of Mahālakṣmi to Viṣṇu introduces one leitmotif in underrate of his incarnations.<sup>41</sup> In this context he mentioned the curse of sage Bhṛgu to Viṣṇu that was predicted here. This story, found in the twelfth chapter of the fourth skandha of the *DBh*, narrates the account of Bhṛgu’s curse to Viṣṇu. When Viṣṇu killed Bhṛgu’s wife, he became angry and imprecated Viṣṇu—

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<sup>38</sup> *ibid*, 1.5.49.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid*, 1.5.73.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid*. 1.5.80.

<sup>41</sup> Brown. C. Mackenzie: *Op. Cit.*, pp. 45-46.

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“Avatārā mṛtyuloke santu macchāpasambhavāḥ/  
Prāyo garbhabavam duḥkhaṁ bhukṣva pāpājjanārrdana//”<sup>42</sup>

O Janārdana! by my curse, you may undergo incarnations in the world of mortals. You may experience abundant sufferings arising from birth in the womb on account of your sin.

Brown suggests this tradition to demean Viṣṇu clearly established in the *DBh*, can unhesitatingly elaborate the old themes or to develop new or parallel versions.<sup>43</sup>

This curse symbolically explained the immediate cause of the curse to be due to the *tāmasī śakti*’s entry into Mahālakṣmī.<sup>44</sup> The *tāmasī-śakti* is a manifestation of the Devī considered as other elemental causes. These are *kāla* or time, *karma* or action and *svabhāva* or innate nature.<sup>45</sup> Here the term

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<sup>42</sup> *DBh*,4.12.8.

<sup>43</sup> Brown. C. Mackenzie: ‘loc.cit.’p.46.

<sup>44</sup> “Udadhestanayāṁ viṣṇuṁ samsthītāmantike priyāṁ/  
Jahāsa vadaṇaṁ vīkṣya tasyāstatra manoramaṇ//  
Tayā jñātaṁ harirñūnaṁ kathaṁ māṁ hasati prabhuḥ/  
Virūpaṁ hariṇā dṛṣṭaṁ mukhaṁ me kena hetunā//”  
Vināpi kāraṇenādya kathaṁ hāsyasya sambhavaḥ/  
Sapatnī vā kṛtā tena manye’nyā varavarṇinī//  
Tataḥ kopayutā jātā mahālakṣmī tamogūṇo/  
Tāmasī tu tadā śaktistasyā dehe’atidāruṇā//  
Tāmasyāviṣṭadehā sā cukopātīśayaṁ tadā/  
Śanakai samuvācedamidam patatu te śiraḥ//”*DBh*, 1.5.75-80.

<sup>45</sup> “Svavaśo’yaṁ na jīvo’si svakarmmavaśagaḥ sadā/  
Tat karma trividhaṁ proktaṁ vidva*DBh*istattvadarśibhiḥ//

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*svabhāva* specifically refers to women's nature.<sup>46</sup> The term *strī-svabhāva* is individualized by Devī as reckless, naivety, intolerance; covetousness, in chastity, and austerity the innate virtues of women. Thus due to the curse of the enraged Devī, Vāsudeva's head fell into the salty ocean.<sup>47</sup> According to this myth, the women's nature of wickedness may be put for good use, as there is even a highest power intending fate itself. Mahālakṣmī might have cursed unwittingly because of the influence of Devī and also for serving a universal divine purpose<sup>48</sup> of the destruction of the demon Hayagrīva.

The second major reason behind Viṣṇu's beheading motif is the account of demon Hayagrīva. In the past a demon called Hayagrīva, received a boon from Devī after a strong penance on the banks of the river Sarasvatī. He meditated on Devī as *tāmasī-śakti* with the *bīja mantra*—

“Purā daityo mahāvāhurhayagrīvo'tiviśrutaḥ/  
Tapaścakre sarasvatyāstīre paramadāruṇaṃ//  
Japannekāḁṣaram mantraṃ māvāyājātmakaṃ mama/  
Nirāhāro jātātmā ca sarvvabhogavivarjjitaḥ//

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Saṁcitam vartamānaṁca prārabdhaṁca tṛtīyakaṃ/

Kālakarmmasvabhāvaiśca tataṃ sarvamideṃ jagat//”*ibid.*, 3.20.36-37.

<sup>46</sup> “Strī svabhāvācca bhāvitvāt kālayogagādvīnirgataḥ/

Avicāryya tadā dattaḥ śāpaḥ svasukhanāśanaḥ//

Sapatnīsambhavaṃ duḥkhaṃ vaidhavyādadhikantviti/

Vicintya manasetyuktaṃ tāmasīśaktiyogataḥ//”*ibid.*, 1.5.81-82.

<sup>47</sup> “Anṛtaṃ sāhasaṃ māvā mūrkhataṃ atilobhatā/

Aśaucaṃ nirddayaṁca strīṇāṃ doṣaḥ svabhāvajāḥ//

Saśīrṣaṃ vāsudevaṃ taṃ karomyadya yathā purā/

Śīro'sya śāpayogena nimagnaṃ lavaṇāmbudhau//”*ibid.*, 1.5.83-84.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, 1.5.79.

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Dhyāyanmām tāmasīm śaktim sarvvabhūṣaṇabhūṣitām/  
Evam varṣasahasraṇca tapaścakre'tidāruṇam//"<sup>49</sup>

Eventually Devī appeared before him, pleased with his meditation and was ready to grant him a boon—

“Tadāhaṃ tāmasaṃ rūpaṃ kṛtvā tatra samāgatā/  
Darśane puratastasya dhyātaṃ tattena yādṛṣam//  
Siṃhoparisthitā tatra tamavocaṃ dayānvitā/  
Varam vrūhi mahābhāga dadāmi tava suvrata//”<sup>50</sup>

He then overwhelmed with joy bowed Devī with tears in his eyes,<sup>51</sup> bestowed a short eulogy<sup>52</sup> and requested to grant the boon of immortality.<sup>53</sup> But Devī refused and asked Hayagrīva to request for other boon—

“Jātasya hi dhrubo mṛtyurdhruvaṃ janma mṛtasya ca/  
Maryādā cedṛṣī loke bhavecce kathamanyathā//  
Evam taṃ niścayaṃ kṛtvā maraṇe rākṣasottama/

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<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, 1.5.86-88.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, 1.5.89-90.

<sup>51</sup> “Dṛṣtvā rūpaṃ madīyaṃ sa premoṭphullavilocanaḥ/  
Harṣāśrupūrṇanayanastuṣṭāva sa ca mām tadā//”*ibid.*, 1.5.92.

<sup>52</sup> “Namo devai mahāmāye sṛṣṭisthityantakārīṇi/  
Bhaktānugrahacature kāmade mokṣade śive//  
Dharāmbutejaḥpavana-khapañcānāṇca kāraṇam/  
Tvam gandharasarūpāṇām kāraṇam sparśasavdayoḥ//  
Ghrāṇaṇca rasanā cakṣustvakśrotramindriyāṇi ca/  
Karmendriyāṇi cāsyāṇi tvattaḥ sarvvaṃ maheśvari//”*ibid.*, 1.5.93-95.

<sup>53</sup> “Yathā me maraṇam mātarna bhavet tattathā kuru/  
Bhaveyamamaro yogī tathājeyaḥ surāsuraiḥ//”*ibid.*, 1.5.97.

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Varam varaya ceṣṭam te vicāryya manasā kila//”<sup>54</sup>

Then Hayagrīva requested Devī for the boon that he be killed only by Hayagrīva.<sup>55</sup> It is to be noted here that the boon received by Hayagrīva, was to some extent similar to that of the boon received by Hiraṇyakaśipu.<sup>56</sup> There is no further information about the demon Hayagrīva as a horse-headed one; he is merely known by the name Hayagrīva. In the continuation of the story, Devī described how the demon Hayagrīva tormented the gods and the sages. Surprisingly here she characterized Hayagrīva as *duṣṭātmā*<sup>57</sup> or demonic in nature in spite of his previous devotion. By the grace of the boon granted by Devī no one was capable in the world to slay the demon Hayagrīva and thus Devī instructed the gods to revitalize beheaded Viṣṇu.

For revitalization of Viṣṇu’s severed head, Devī ordered Tvaṣṭā to fix a horse’s head on his beheaded body so that he could kill the demon for the welfare of the gods—

“Tasmācchīryam hayasyāsyā samuddhṛtya manoharam/  
Dehe’tra viśiro viṣṇostvaṣṭā samyojayiṣyati//  
Hayagrīvo’ta bhagavān haniṣyati tamāsuraṃ/  
Pāpiṣṭham dānavam kruraṃ devānām hitakāmyayā//”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, 1.5.98-99.

<sup>55</sup> “Hayagrīvācca me mṛtyurnānyasmājjagadamvike/

Iti me vāñchitam kāmaṃ pūrayasva manogataṃ//”*DBh*, 1.5.100.

<sup>56</sup> R.H. Van Gulik: *Hayagriva: The Mantrayanic Aspect of Horse Cult in China and Japan*. p.18.

<sup>57</sup> “Sa pīḍayati duṣṭātmā munīn devāṃśca sarvvaśaḥ/

Na ko’pi vidyate tasya hantādyā bhuvanatrāye//”*DBh*, 1.5.103.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*, 1.5.104-105.

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Devī Bhagavatī remained silent; the *devas* became very glad and told tvaṣṭā to fix Viṣṇu's severed head. Tvaṣṭā quickly cut off the head of a horse, brought it and transplanted it to the headless body of Viṣṇu. Since the Lord Viṣṇu was known as Hayagrīva. Thereafter Lord Hayagrīva forcibly killed the demon Hayagrīva in a battle—

“Iti śrutvā vacasteṣāṃ tvaṣṭā cātitarāṇvitaḥ/  
Vājīśīrṣaṃ cakarttāsu khaḍgena surasannidhau//  
Viṣṇoḥ śārīre tenāsu yojitaṃ vājimastakaṃ/  
Hayagrīvo harirjāto mahāmāyā prasādataḥ//  
Kiyatā tena kālena dānavo madadarpitaḥ/  
Nihatastarasā saṃkhye devānāṃ ripurojasā//”<sup>59</sup>

The *DBh* concludes that Hari became Hayagrīva through the grace of Mahāmāyā—‘*Hayagrīvo harirjāto mahāmāyā prasādataḥ*.’<sup>60</sup> To hear or read this excellent *upākhyāna* and the sacred nature of Devī, one can be freed from all sorts of difficulties and gain all kinds of wealth.<sup>61</sup>

Let us now analyse the myth considering a number of points.

- *The DBh* combined the two Hayagrīva in a single myth and frequently referred to Viṣṇu as Hayagrīva and also the same name for the demon.

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<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, 1.5.108-110.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, 1.5.109b.

<sup>61</sup> “Ya idaṃ śubhamākhyānaṃ śṛṇvanti bhuvi mānavāḥ/  
Sarvvaduḥkhavinirmuktāste bhavanti na saṃśayaḥ//  
Mahāmāyācaritraṅca pvitraṃ pāpanāśanaṃ/  
Pathatāṃ śṛṇvatāñcaiva sarvvasampattikāraṃ//”*ibid.*, 1.5.111-112.

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R.H. Van Gulik mentions about synthesizing the account of *Devībhāgavata* as—

“One of those paradoxical combinations, much beloved by Indians: Hayagrīva kills Hayagrīva.”<sup>62</sup>

In this context he also refers to the ancient story of so called *Rāma-Rāma* battle or *Rāmarāma*vivāda. The *Rāma-Rāma* battle involves the two forms of divinity, while the Hayagrīva-Hayagrīva battle concerns the divine and the demonic. It is a general perspective of the *Devībhāgavata*. Hayagrīva Viṣṇu, of the two Hayagrīvas is divine by nature and the other is demonic in nature.

- The demon Hayagrīva, who is *tāmasik* by nature, acts in *sāttvik* manner and worships Devī, whereas Lord Viṣṇu, *sāttvik* by nature often engages in *tāmasik* activity. Such a conflicting theme developed in the later *purāṇas* with an intention to emphasize Viṣṇu’s complication in the material qualities or *guṇas* of the world. The two Hayagrīvas suggest a parallelism between intermingled and paradoxical combinations.<sup>63</sup>
- The *DBh*’s account of Viṣṇu’s beheading is based upon the story of *ŚB*,<sup>64</sup> wherein Viṣṇu is identified with ‘*makha*’, or sacrifice. Once the gods performed a sacrifice (*satra*) to attain excellence and glory (*Yaśaṣkāma*) with an agreement to share the benefits of the performance amongst themselves. Among the gods Yajña-Viṣṇu or Makha-Viṣṇu first received the fame; he violated the agreement and carried away the entire credit of the sacrifice. As he stood resting his head at the end of his bow, the gods

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<sup>62</sup> R.H. Van Gulik: *Op. Cit.*, p-19.

<sup>63</sup> Brown. C. Mackenzie. *Op. Cit.*, pp.47-48.

<sup>64</sup> *ŚB*, XVI.1.1.1 ff.

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made the tightened string of the bow bitten off by termites, in order to penalize Makha-Viṣṇu. Immediately the ends of the bow sprung asunder to cut off Viṣṇu's head. It fell with the sound *ghrin*<sup>65</sup> and on falling it became the yonder sun. This myth explains the origin of the ancient ceremony, *pravargya*. The gods then divided the headless Makha-Viṣṇu among themselves and continued headless sacrifice.

But the *DBh* assimilates this myth with a number of modifications.

1. The most explicit variation is the intention behind the story telling. The *DBh* does not explain the origin or a detail of a vedic rite rather abases Viṣṇu regarding the treatment with his body. In this context Shulman has quoted an interesting version of this myth where Viṣṇu puffed with pride at finishing the sacrifice, entered in the *Śaktipura*, the city of the goddess and lost his strength. He fell asleep with his head resting on the bow of Śiva. After inevitable beheading of Viṣṇu, Śiva informs the gods about how to restore his headless body. Shulman also notes the central role played by Devī in both accounts.<sup>66</sup> The *DBh* describes this account of Viṣṇu's beheading as an inauspicious or unusual misery, whereas *ŚB* uses the beheading body to explain the name *pravargya*.

Here it is to be noted that the reference of the headless body, *kabandha* hints at various *kabandhas* of many demons beheaded by Devī as represented in the *Devīmāhātmya*.<sup>67</sup> Interestingly *BhP* gives another reference of *kabandha* in the

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<sup>65</sup> From the sound *ghrin*, *gharma* took its name. *Gharma* refers to the milk boiled in the *pravargya* ceremony, also the cauldron or pot used to heat the milk, and to the *pravargya* itself. Since the body of Yajña Viṣṇu was stretched out, it took the name *pravargya*.

<sup>66</sup> Brown, C. Mackenzie: *Op.Cit.*, p.246.

<sup>67</sup> *DM*, 2.62-64.

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story of Dakṣa's sacrifice. After the ruinous yajña had been restored by Śiva, the assembly of the Brāhmaṇas worshipped Viṣṇu for the successful continuation of the rites. Dakṣa's wife praised Viṣṇu with these words: O supreme Lord, having all its parts without you, the head of sacrifice or *makha*, does not look beautiful, like a man or puruṣa who is headless, a mere *kabandha*.<sup>68</sup>

“Svāgataṃ te prasīdeśa tubhyaṃ namaḥ/  
Śrīnivāsa śriyā kāntayā trāhi naḥ/  
Tvāmṛte'dhīśa nāṅgairmakhaḥ śobhate/  
Śīrṣahīnaḥ kabandha yathā puruṣaḥ//”<sup>69</sup>

This praise clearly resonates the theme of ancient Brāhmaṇic myth which is also mentioned in the *DBh* with new modulations.

2. Second alteration is the ŚB's myth of sacrificial context. In the myth of the ŚB, Viṣṇu along with other gods once performed a sacrifice to attain the excellence and glory. In the *DBh*, Viṣṇu does not participate in such execution, but is introduced as a desirable theme where he is under the control of *yoganidrā*.<sup>70</sup>

Moreover, the *DBh* adapts the ŚB myth by introducing the concept of *māyā*. In the *DBh*, the gods think the beheading must be an illusion “*māyeyaṃ kasya devasya yayā te'dya śiro hr̥tam*”. Here *māyā* was responsible for the dreadful

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<sup>68</sup> Brown, C. Mackenzie: *Op.Cit.*, p.42.

<sup>69</sup> *BhP*, 4.7.36.

<sup>70</sup> Serving a story of introduction the story of *yoganidrā* in the slaying of Madhu-Kaiṭabha that narrated in the following chapters. Brown, C. Mackenzie: *Op.Cit.*, p.42.

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occurrence, since Lord Viṣṇu himself is identified as *māyeśa*. Nīlakaṇṭha, the commentator adds an interesting note—

“māyā never deludes Viṣṇu, the Lord of māyā. Even today this is believed by some who recognize the ‘māyā mastery’ of Viṣṇu but fail to accept the power of Bhagavatī, the governess of all. This beheading was due to the absence of māyā mastery on Viṣṇu, rather on the account of the maya mastery belonging just to Devī.”<sup>71</sup>

Thus *DBh* might be using the epithet ‘*māyeśa*’ ironically that he who is called ‘māyā master’, actually his master is *māyā*.

3. In the *DBh*’s story the discussion of *māyā* set up the goddess herself who is ultimately responsible for the dreadful occurrence i.e., the beheading of the supreme Lord. Moreover, of the same consideration she knows how to restore Viṣṇu’s head. This account lead us back to the *ŚB* where we discover that in the result of beheading sacrifice, when the gods were continuing fruitless endeavour with the *makha*, there was the sage Dadhyaṅc who knew how to restore its head. The secret knowledge revealed by the horse-headed sage Dadhyaṅc to the Aśvins and played the part of fixing the head to beheaded Makha-Viṣṇu. This esoteric teaching of Dadhyaṅc came to be widely known as *Madhuvidyā* or *Brahmavidyā*,<sup>72</sup> mystical knowledge of supreme Brahman. It is

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<sup>71</sup> Brown, C. Mackenzie: *ibid.*, 43.

<sup>72</sup> In the Madhukāṇḍa of the *Bṛhadāraṇyak Upaniṣad* (II.5.16-19) identified with Dadhyaṅc’s sweet teaching. Śaṅkara, in his commentary (II.5.17) divides Dadhyaṅc’s teachings into two parts. One deals with Pravargya ceremony and the other with *Brahmavidyā*, the knowledge of supreme Brahman. Śrīdhara explicitly following Śaṅkara refers Dadhyaṅc as “proficient in the *pravargya* and the *Brahmavidyā*” in his commentary on *BhP* V.9.52. Brown, C. Mackenzie: *ibid.*, p.247.

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not a mere coincidence in the *Devībhāgavata*, when Brahmā asks the Vedas to praise Devī by this very name.

4. Dadhyañc's traditional role as revealer of the mystic knowledge with a horse headed appearance has been divided in the *DBh*. His act as revealer of the mystic knowledge has been imposed on Devī, whereas his equine countenance appears in the form of Viṣṇu. Thus the accordance between Dadhyañc and Viṣṇu could be their severed head and equine aspect has been noted by Bosch.<sup>73</sup> Weber noted this significant parallel between Puruṣa Nārāyaṇa and sage Dadhyañc as proclaiming sacred wisdom by means of a horse head.<sup>74</sup> Sāyaṇa in his commentary noted that Dadhyañc's head fell down in the lake *svarṇāvat* from where Indra regained it and used it in fight against the demons.<sup>75</sup> In the *DBh* Brahmā informs that Viṣṇu's head was found in the salt ocean. This reminds us about the ancient submarine horse head lurking in the ocean and waiting for Viṣṇu's adoption as his own equine head.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Bosch, F.D.K. *The God with Horses Head. In Selected Studies in Indonesian Archaeology*. p.144.

<sup>74</sup> Senart followed weber in seeing the inseparability of the Nārāyaṇa Puruṣa and Dadhyañc legends and highlight the parallel between the thunderous yet melodic speech of the two promulgators of divine wisdom. Bosch points out further similarities including their furious destroying roles and their ancient identification with the cosmic sacrificial Puruṣa or Prajāpati. Brown, C. Mackenzie: *Op. Cit.*, p.248.

<sup>75</sup> As for Lord Viṣṇu, the reference found in the *śānti parva* of *MBh* where in the Madhu-Kaiṭabha myth, after restored the Vedas to Brahmā, Viṣṇu placed his horse head in the northeast ocean. Elsewhere in the same epic reflects a connection within the horse headed Viṣṇu known as Vaḍavāmukha and the salt ocean. Brown, C. Mackenzie: *Op. Cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>76</sup> Brown, C. Mackenzie: *ibid.*, 'loc. Cit.' p. 45.

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5. Devī replaces Dadhyañc as a discloser of the secret *Madhuvidyā* or *Brahmavidyā*. Devī not only takes the role of Dadhyañc as revealer of the secret knowledge *Brahmavidyā*, but becomes known as the *Brahmavidyā* itself.<sup>77</sup> Yet she is fully discrete from his horse headed appearance. She

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<sup>77</sup> *Brahmavidyā* appears already as an epithet of a goddess in the *MBh*. There is a renowned *Durgāstotra*, where Durgā praised as *Brahmavidyā*, the knowledge of Brahman among knowledge's. She also extolled as *mahānidrā* or great sleep of embodied beings. *DBh* refers Devī as *vidyā* which executed by the English translator as *Brahmavidyā*. Hazra says that *DBh* deals with *Brahmavidyā* especially in the twelfth *skandha* and in the Hayagrīva story narrated in the fifth chapter of the first *skandha*. Concerning the term Hayagrīva-Brahmavidyā, Nīlakaṇṭha in his commentary of *DBh* states that "in the first *skandha* of *DBh*, the famous demon named Hayagrīva who practice a *vidyā* treating of Brahman. This *vidyā* mantra identifies a female divinity that the demon practice *vidyā* which found in the first *skandha*. Devī herself declares that the demon practiced *ekākṣaram mantraṃ* comprising of the *māyā bīja*."

But according to the *BhP* which identifies a *vaiṣṇava purāṇa*, here Hayagrīva *Brahmavidyā* refers to a Hayagrīva mantra addressed to Hayaśirṣaḥ viṣṇu. The Hayagrīva mantra here is addressed to, not by the demon Hayagrīva. Jīva Goswami, one *vaiṣṇava* scholar in his *Tattvasandarbha* cites Śrīdhara's definition and claimed that Hayagrīva *Brahmavidyā* is associated with the slaying of Vṛtra. The term Hayagrīva hererefers to the horse-headed Dadhīci, who proclaimed the knowledge of supreme Brahman, known as 'Nārāyaṇa Varma'. In the *BhP* (VI.9.52-53) Dadhīci plays a crucial role. He is the chief in the transmission of this *Nārāyaṇa Varma* and through the transmission history *Nārāyaṇa Varma* identifies with the teaching of Dadhyañc. Jīva Goswami equated Hayagrīva *Brahmavidyā* with *Nārāyaṇa Varma*. Sanyal point out some objections to Jīva Goswami's identification of Hayagrīva *Brahmavidyā* with the *Nārāyaṇa Varma*. Moreover, he thinks that Hayagrīva *Brahmavidyā* is not used in the *BhP*. Even the definition of Hayagrīva *Brahmavidyā* given by Nīlakaṇṭha is a major theme in the *DBh* either, nor is the mantra uttered by demon Hayagrīva in fifth chapter of the first *skandha*, referred to by that name. Brown, C. Mackenzie: *Op. cit.*, pp. 241-247.

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presents herself before the gods as an abstract voice that safely distances her from the kind of physical calamity that happened with the horse headed Dadhyañc. This shows the likeness of her identification with Brahmavidyā and eventually with the supreme Brahman of the Upaniṣad.<sup>78</sup>

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Interestingly there is an ancient *Sūtra* work on the philosophy of *Śāktas* named *Hayagrīvaśaktisūtra*. It is also known as Hayagrīva Brahmavidyā. Hayagrīva is traditionally believed to be the progenitor of a system of philosophy known as *Śāktadarśana* or Hayagrīva Brahmavidyā. As the doctrine advocated in the present treatise are similar to those postulated by the worshippers of the goddess Śakti, it is named *Śāktadarśana*. *Śāktadarśana* is also known as *tantravidyā*. Few works of this kind belonging to the *Sūtra* period (500 BC to 500 A.D.) could be found. The *Paraśurāmakalpasūta* is often stated as an ancient authoritative work in the *śākta* system of philosophy. There is another short work consisting of about 400 *sūtras*, which is attributed to Agastya known as *Agastyasūtra* that is quite later than the *Hayagrīvaśaktisūtra*, as it refers to Hayagrīva in the *sūtras* of Agastya. The system of philosophy propounded in the *sūtra*.

*Hayagrīvaśaktisūtra* comprises 18 *adhyāyas*, each *adhyāya* consisting of 4 *pādas*. There are in all 1360 *sūtras* in the work of *tantravidyā*. This *vidyā* was very difficult to attain that *vidyā* and more difficult is to comprehend their meaning. Moreover, the *vidyā* is kept secret by its followers.

*Śākta* Philosophy has not so far any representative *sūtra* as is the pattern in traditional style of Indian Philosophy. The *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* does not mention *śākta darśana* amongst the summaries of philosophical systems. The *Śāktadarśana* of Hayagrīva edited by Prof. K. V. Abhyankar is Indian philosophy compiles *sūtra* dealing with all aspects of *śākta* faith and philosophy. Abhyankar, K.V: *Śākta Darśana of Hayagrīva*. pp. ii-xxxx.

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<sup>78</sup> The famous *Kena Upaniṣad* reflects the story of the humbling of Agni, Vāyu, and Indra, the goddess Umā Haimavatī appears in the sky as a mediator between the supreme and the gods, also as revealer of Brahman. The story goes to how the gods having obtained a conquest through Brahman, begin to take credit for the conquest themselves. Brahman

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6. Another interesting twist is the role of the Vedas in the Hayagrīva episode. Here we have seen that Lord Viṣṇu is traditionally associated with the Vedas as their revealer and protector. But in *DBh* we find this role upturned. Here the Vedas take the role to rescue Lord Viṣṇu with appeal to Devī for reviving the Lord.

Emphasis on the divine goddess in *DBh purāṇa* is evident from the curse given to Lord Viṣṇu and in the mythological narrative of Viṣṇu-Hayagrīva. The significance of Viṣṇu in the horse-headed form is confirmed by purāṇic explanation of the puzzling situation of a curse given to Lord Viṣṇu and as nothing in this world happens without a cause, so is this appearance caused by a curse given to Viṣṇu. This not only fulfils the purpose of Mahālakṣmi's curse but also serves beneficent for the world due to the killing of the demon Hayagrīva who bagged a boon from Devī only to be killed by Hayagrīva. The myth reveals many of the basic strategies of the *DBh* in its abasement of Viṣṇu. The beheading concept continued from the early Vedic myth followed by Brāhmaṇic myth (*ŚB*) and then purāṇic myth, specifically in "*The*

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disabuse them, appeared before them in the form of Yakṣa or spirit. Firstly Agni and then Vāyu tried to discover who or what the exposition was. The two gods move towards the spirit, introduced themselves by boasting of their powers to burn and blow away anything. Then the Yakṣa challenged them to burn and blow away a slab of grass he placed before them. Subsequently, on their failure to find out the exposition they returned to other gods. Next Indra went to the Yakṣa but the spirit disappeared on his approach. Indra then faced a glorious woman, the beautiful Umā Haimavatī. Then she revealed the identity of Yakṣa as Brahman, the source of all power including the same behind their conquest.

Śaṅkara in his commentary argues that the above story is meant to eulogize *Brahmavidyā*, by which Indra, Agni, and other gods attained excellence. He specifically equates Umā with *vidyā* or *Brahmavidyā*. Sāyaṇa also identifies her with *Brahmavidyā*. Brown, C. Mackenzie. *Op.cit.*, p.44.

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*Devībhāgavata*” and expanded with typical reasoning and fantasy, to include the stories relating to the curse of Mahālakṣmī and the promise of a boon given to Devī’s worshipper, the demon Hayagrīva. Aspects of divinity and iniquity in nature, cause, event and consequence of both mortals and immortals appear as unavoidable complexities designed for good and reform.

**CHAPTER VI:  
HAYAGRĪVA IN THE  
YOGINĪ TANTRA**

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Hayagrīva is referred to in some early literature as one of the incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu and also an *asura* in others. The *MBh* and some of the *purāṇas* present the story of Hayagrīva where He is celebrated for rescuing the Vedas, stolen by the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha and returning them again to Brahmā. In the *vaiṣṇava* tradition of religion, Lord Hayagrīva occupies an exalted position and He is generally worshipped with great fervour and His blessings are sought, at the beginning of study of science and knowledge. The goddess Sarasvatī is generally known as the goddess of learning. Lord Hayagrīva as god of knowledge is highly revered as He not only protects all types of creatures of the world, but is also known to have imparted knowledge to goddess Sarasvatī Herself, the presiding deity of learning. Goddess Sarasvatī is generally worshipped by all in the fifth day (*'tithi'*) of New moon fortnight (*'śuklapakṣa'*) of the month of *māgha*. And Lord Hayagrīva is worshiped on the day of full moon in the month of *Śrāvaṇa* (*śrāvaṇa pūrṇimā*), at *mahānavamī* – the ninth day of the *navarātra* Festival. Thus, without His grace, no one can obtain pure knowledge whether sacred or secular. But in the *śākta* tradition of religion, Hayagrīva occupies a completely different role. To give our dissertation a comprehensive form we have to cast a glance into the Assam Tāntrik literature, *Yoginītantra* regarding the worship of Lord Hayagrīva.

Researches on the origin of Hayagrīva-worship route to temples dedicated to Hayagrīva in India including the one in the north east state of Assam, previously known by the name *Prāgjyotiṣapura*<sup>1</sup>, *Kāmarūpa*<sup>2</sup>. There, a great

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<sup>1</sup> *Prāgjyotiṣa* is the ancient name of Assam. The great epics the *Rāmāyana*, the *Mahābhārata* as well as some principal *purāṇas* mention *Prāgjyotiṣa*. *Prāgjyotiṣa* was a famous kingdom often mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*. The *Mahābhārata* contains

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references to the city and country of *Prāgjyotiṣa*, its ruler Naraka and Bhagadatta and the chinas, kirātas and other people consisting of the army of Bhagadatta (*Sabhā parva* 26-30; *Udyoga parva*, 18; *Karṇa parva*, 5). The *Rāmāyana* (*Ādi kāṇḍa*, 35; *Kiskindhyā kāṇḍa*, 13), records the foundation of the city of *Prāgjyotiṣa* by Amūrtaraja and its location in the Varāha mountain. The *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa* (*Kūrmavibhāga*, Ch.58) places *Prāgjyotiṣa* on the face of the tortoise. It is also mentioned in the list of the peoples of the east as given by Varāhamihira in the *Bṛhat Saṃhitā*. The same statement is found in the *Matsya* (Ch. 114, 5.45) and *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇas* (Ch. 16). The *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* refers to *Prāgjyotiṣa* when re-counting the story of Naraka. Bharata (*Nāṭyaśāstra*, Ch.14. 5. 45-47) while referring to the countries where the Adra-Māgadhī literary style was prevalent, mentions *Prāgjyotiṣa* with the adjoining countries of the east: “*Prāgjyotiṣa pulindāśca, vaidehāstāmraliptakāḥ prācyā prabratayaścaiva yujanti hyodra-māgadhīm.*” The *Kāvyaśāstra* (Ch.17) of Rājaśekhara also places *Prāgjyotiṣa*, Tamraliptaka and the Puṇḍra countries in the east. *Kālikāpurāṇa* (Ch. 39.126) says “Formerly Brahmā stayed here and created the stars; so the city is called *Prāgjyotiṣapura*, a city equal to the city of Indra.” This etymological explanation given by the historians of Assam. Gait states that ‘*Prāg*’ means former or eastern and ‘*Jyotiṣa*’ means star, astrology, shining. Thus *Prāgjyotiṣapura* may be taken to mean the city of eastern astrology. This name is interesting in connection with the reputation which the country has always held as a land of magic and incantations and with the view that it was in Assam where the *tāntrik* form of worship originated. According to Kakati, *Prāgjyotiṣa* connected with the topographical features of the land rather than with any religious cult. These references illustrate *Prāgjyotiṣapura* or *Prāgjyotiṣa* was on an extensive hill. This topographical feature of *Prāgjyotiṣa* as described in the earlier texts correspond to an Austric formation like Pagar-juh (jo)-tic (c’=ch) that means a region of extensive high hills. Thus *Prāgjyotiṣa* may be a Sanskritisation of a non-aryan formation. Barua, B.K: *A Cultural History of Assam*, pp. 10-13.

<sup>2</sup> Both in the early and later Vedic literature like *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* have some references of *Kāmarūpa* regarding the progress of Aryan culture. The *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa* narrates a tradition concerning the origin of the name *Kāmarūpa*. Some other texts refer *Kāmarūpa* as the land of sunrise. *Kālikāpurāṇa* describes,

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*vaiṣṇava* temple, ‘Hayagrīva Mādhava’ on the top of a hill called *Maṇikūṭa* of *Hājo*, is dedicated to an ancient horse-headed incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu and the temple still exists. Hayagrīva-Viṣṇu is worshipped in the temple with great pomp and dignity since the age of *Kālikāpurāṇa* (10<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) and *Yoginī Tantra* (17<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), the time of origin of the two Sanskrit works composed in Assam. Hayagrīva, a Horse-headed incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu, dates back to 2000 B.C. when Indo-Aryan people worshipped the horse for its speed, strength, and intelligence. Today only small sections of Indian Hindu population worship this form of Hayagrīva. The name does not possess as much importance as other Hindu gods, however, Hayagrīva occupies an important place among Buddhist gods in the Buddhist Tantra. Interestingly the Hayagrīva Mādhava<sup>3</sup> is a sanctorum where both Hindus and Buddhists worship; distinctiveness and similarities in the two scriptures of Assam Sanskrit literature and till date information about the temple is presented here.

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immediately after Naraka, Mithilā became king and was placed in the charge of the goddess Kāmākhyā and the name of the land was changed from *Prāgjyotiṣa* to *Kāmarūpa*. In Classical Sanskrit literature *Prāgjyotiṣa* and *Kāmarūpa* occur side by side. For instance, Kālidāsa in his *Raghuvamśa* refers to both *Prāgjyotiṣa* and *Kāmarūpa* as lying in the east of the Brahmaputra. Barua, S.L: *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, pp.32-33.

<sup>3</sup> A synonym of Kṛṣṇa, because He could be properly understood by proper meditation and *yoga*. He got the name Mādhava (MBh, 5.7.4). Lord Viṣṇu is known as Mādhava for three reasons:-

- He is born in *yādava* clan also known as Madhu in Kṛṣṇa incarnation.
  - He is the husband of ‘Mā’ Lakṣmī of the universe and also a lord of ‘Mā’, knowledge. Here ‘*mā*’ means mother goddess Lakṣmī and ‘*dhava*’ means consort.
  - He as Lord Kṛṣṇa, killed a demon called Madhu.
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In this chapter we have discussed about Hayagrīva, the deity with Horse head, from religious perspective vis-a-vis comparative and analytical study. This study has been conducted with an objective to compare the present temple with its ancient history. For this purpose we have conducted the literature survey as well as field survey of the temple to collect necessary information.

### 1. Origin of Tantra:

Numerous ethos have been mentioned by scholars about the origin of Tantra. In the *Atharvaveda*, several references of esoteric practices can be found which are similar to *tāntrik* practices. Chintaharana Chakraborty refers to the *Kauśikasutra* of the AV where of *vaśīkaraṇa vidyā* is mentioned. Pāṇinīan grammar also mentions *vaśīkaraṇa* mantra or *hṛdya*.<sup>4</sup> In the time of Bāṇbhaṭṭa, a lot of Brāhmaṇas were involved in the tantric practices. There are references of the great *sādhakas* who could destroy a whole family by the power of *abhicāra*, mentioned Bāṇbhaṭṭa.<sup>5</sup> In the Buddha and Jaina literature there are also references of tantric practices such as *Brahmajālasutta* and other *suttas* of Buddhist works as well as *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* of Jainas.<sup>6</sup>

Regarding the origin of *tantraśāstra*, there are several views of scholars. According to the commentary on *Tantrāloka* by Abhinavagupta, tantras originated in Assam<sup>7</sup> and *tantraśāstra* was adopted from Bhairava and

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<sup>4</sup> Pāṇini, 4.4.96.

<sup>5</sup> “Abhicāra iva viprakṛtā... manasvinaḥ” Harṣacarita 6, p.45.

<sup>6</sup> Barthakuria, A.C: *The Tantric Religion of India*, p.3.

<sup>7</sup> “Bhairavyā bhairavāt prāptaṃ/

Yogaṃ vyāpya tataḥ priye//

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Bhairavī by Matsyendranātha. It was later inherited by his disciple Mīnanātha. The Tantrarāja opines that nine *nāthas* spread the tantras on the earth. Winternitz thinks that tantras originated in Bengal and spread to Assam and Nepal.<sup>8</sup>

Tantrism originated from *Kāmarūpa* and *Bengal* and then it spread to other parts of India. Smith points out that *Kāmarūpa*—

“... is a gate through which successive hordes of immigrants from the great hive of the Mongolian race in the western China have poured into the plains of India and many of the residence tribes are still almost pure Mongolians. The religion of such tribes is of more than of local concern, because it supplies the clue of the strange tantric development of both Buddhism and Hinduism which are so characteristic of mediaeval and modern Bengal.”<sup>9</sup>

A degenerated form of Buddhism named *Vajrayāna* or Tāntrik Buddhism is considered by the scholars to be of seventh century A.D.<sup>10</sup> Sri Choudhury

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Kāmarūpre mahāpīthe/

Machabdena mahāmanā//

Tatsakāśāttu siddhena/

Mīnākhyena mathātmanā//”*Tantrāloka*, pp.24-25.

<sup>8</sup> Winternitz, M.M: *History of Indian Literature*, Vol.I, p.592.

<sup>9</sup> Maity, P.K: *Historical Studies of the cult of Goddess Manasa*. Pnuthi Pustak, Kolkata. Reprint 2001, p-33.

<sup>10</sup> From the last part of the 7th century A.D. Buddhism also underwent major changes to develop into distinct sects, like the *Mahāyāna*, *Vajrayāna* and *Tantrayāna*, in *Kāmrūpa*. Of these sects, *Vajrayāna* became very popular in *Kāmarūpa*. Along with the growth of Tāntrik Buddhism, the cult of Śiva and Śakti worship also flourished here and the cult of Śakti worship incorporated various elements and ideas of *Vajrayāna* Buddhism, and that

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opines that about ninth century tantric faiths were developed under the Pāla kings of Bengal as an offshoot of later Buddhism.<sup>11</sup> In approximately twelfth century A.D. which was the last period of the Pālas of Bengal, the Buddhist tantrism gradually blended with the Hindu tantrism.<sup>12</sup> There are different theories as to how this form of Buddhism grew.

Ancient *Kāmarūpa* was one of the centres of this clan of Buddhism. As opined by Bhattacharyya. As cited in the *Vajrayāna* scripture *Sādhnamālā*, the four *pīṭhas* Kāmākhyā or *Kāmarūpa*, *Srihaṭṭa*, *Purnagiri*, and *Oḍḍiyana* are the main zones of *tāntrik* worship.<sup>13</sup> The later form of Buddhism called *Vajrayāna* or Tāntrik Buddhism is described by Winternitz as “a queer mixture of monastic philosophy, magic and erotic’s with a small element of Buddhist ideals”.<sup>14</sup>

Here it is noted that Kāmākhyā is associated with tantrism as well as śaktism since primitive time. Much earlier than 1126 A.D., Kāmākhyā became the centre of tantrism which is proved by *Kālikāpurāṇa*, a treatise of tenth century A.D. The contribution of Austric and Mongoloid people, perhaps, the *śavaras*, *pulindas* and *kirātas* as the originator of the mother worship is revealed through the state of religious worship or tantrism in *Kāmarūpa*.

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is why Śaktism and *Vajrayāna* Tantrikism prevailed simultaneously in Assam. Chaudhury thinks that “This synthesis of the two sects later came to be called Brāhmanical-Hinduism.” Chaudhury, P.C: *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D.* 1959. pp.422-430.

<sup>11</sup> Choudhury, P.C: *ibid.*, p-131.

<sup>12</sup> Benerjee, R. D: *Eastern Indian School of Mediaeval Sculpture*. p-3.

<sup>13</sup> Bhattacharya, BenoYTosh. *Sādhnamālā*, II. Oriental Institute, p-xxxvii-n.

<sup>14</sup> M, Winternitz. *History of Indian Literature*. Vol-I, p-388.

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## 2.Yoginī Tantra:

The *Yoginī Tantra*, is one of the most famous tantra texts of Assam Sanskrit Literature, contained in the *Śākta* school of Assam, written in seventeenth century. The *tantrapīṭha* of Kāmakhyā is the oldest bench of *tāntrik* tradition and probably from here it spreaded to other parts of the country. Naturally the Śakti cult leads the religious beliefs expanded by the *tāntrik* works. B.N. Śāstri described the significance of *YT* in his introduction to the *tāntrik* work.<sup>15</sup> It is referred to in *YT* that, *makārādi mahipatiḥ* invaded Assam and kept the state under occupation for one year.<sup>16</sup> Barthakuria says,

“Having a name with the initial letter ‘m’, the king refers to general Mirjumla of Mughal army who attacked Assam in 1662 A.D. During the reign of Ahom (Saumāra) king Jayadhvaja Singha the capital city Gargaon and the vast part of Assam was under Mughal occupancy till January 1663. Mir Jumla finally left for Dhaka after an agreement with the Ahom king and died there.”<sup>17</sup>

From this historical reference found in the *YT*, it is clear that this period started from 1662 and ended in 1673 when Barphukan recovered Assam

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<sup>15</sup> “Why this work is called *Yoginī Tantra*? The answer of this question can be traced in the narration of the 8<sup>th</sup> *Paṭala* of the first part of *Yoginī Tantra*. It says that when Kālī, wearing a garland of human heads with dishevelled hairs and protruding tongue, was standing on the bosom of Mahākālā, crores of *yoginīs* emerged from her radiant body.” Barthakuria, A.C: *The Tantric Religion of India*, p.44.

<sup>16</sup> “Tato raṇe ca saumāraṃ jītvā yavana īpsitaṃ//  
Varṣamevākarodrājyaṃ makarādirmahīpatiḥ//” *YT*, 1.12.48-49.

<sup>17</sup> Barthakuria, A.C: *Op.Cit*, p.41.

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from Mughals.<sup>18</sup> Thus it is clear that the *YT* was written after 1663 AD and it is not only a pure tantric text but also a source of ancient Assam's history.

*YT* portrays a clear image of the religious life of Assam. Śiva and Pārvati occupy the supreme position in this text and the content proceeds through conversation between the divine pair about religious and philosophical matters. In particular, the tantric goddess in *YT* occupies an equally significant role as the other gods Viṣṇu, Indra, Śiva in the *purāṇas*. Though it is a *śākta* work where the importance is laid on the worship of Kāmākhyā, but this text also adequately honours Viṣṇu. From the reverential remarks in the *YT*, it is clear that Viṣṇu was a great god and there were many places where lord Viṣṇu was worshipped in different forms at the time of the *YT*.

Hayagrīva Viṣṇu is worshipped with proper dignity and honour in the Hayagrīva Mādhava temple situated on the *Maṇikūṭa* hill of *Hājo*<sup>19</sup>, Assam.

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<sup>18</sup> Barthakuria, A.C: *ibid.*, *Op.Cit*, p.42.

<sup>19</sup> It is possible that the term '*Hājo*' originated from a Bodo word. '*Hājo*' means hill, which is at a few miles north-west of the city of Guwahati in the present *Kāmarūpa* district of Assam. Some says that *Hājo* is named after the name of '*Hāju*', the grandfather of the Koch king Visvasingha. According to this view, the Koch had established its capital in this village and named '*Hāju*', the founder of this dynasty. In 1581 the Koch king Narnārayaṇa divided his kingdom into two parts. The western part of the kingdom came to be known as *Koch Bihar* and the eastern part as *Koch Hājo*. Referring to *Koch Bihar* and *Koch Hājo*, Gait writes, "the former name also survives but the only trace of the latter is in the town called *Hājo*, a few miles north of Gauhati."

*Hājo*, a sacred complex, mentioned in the *purāṇas*, *YT*, ancient history and *vaiṣṇava* literature, is a paradise for the sociologists, linguists and folklorists. In the histories written in the period of the Mughals, it was known as Sujabad or Sujanagar after the name of Shujauddin, the governor of Bengal and son of the Mughal emperor Shahjahan and

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In this context it may be noted here that the *Kālikāpurāṇa*, another Sanskrit text, originated in Assam, refers to several manifestations of Viṣṇu or Mādhava in *Kāmarūpa* and also mentions the names of places where they

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who constructed a mosque at the Shrine of Ghiasuddin. Sujauddin stayed here for some time in 1660 A.D. and endowed the mosque with land and people. *Hājo* is a place of historical, cultural and religious importance with its age-old temples, shrines, mosques etc. Politically, the area was under the royal camps of the *Kochas*, the Mughals and the Ahoms at different times mentioned in the Assam History. From the religious view-point it was a confluence of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam under the patronage of different political powers and religious personalities. There was an influx of people belonging to different ethnic groups with their cultural traits. Referring to the age-old cultural heritage of tolerance and acceptance of the people of the area, P. Goswami says, “It is perhaps the only place in the state where one may find shrines dedicated to Śiva, Pārvati, Mādhava or Viṣṇu, the Buddha and to a Muslim saint, thus bringing together persons belonging to various and even conflicting faiths.”

In spite of its diversities in religion, race and language, it is a holy land of tolerance and social integration. While people in the world are fighting among themselves in the name of communalism, *Hājo* stands as an exemplary place for communal and social harmony where the sound of the drum and the Azan can be heard at the same time. A socio-cultural study of *Hājo* is of paramount importance for a better understanding of the beliefs and practices, customs and traditions, festivals and institutions of the locality. Some noted scholars, British officials and writers have dealt with certain aspects of the socio-religious institutions of the area. P.C.Das, in his doctoral thesis *Hājo: A Socio-Cultural Study* brought into light the socio-cultural aspects of the people of *Hājo*. While considering the advent of Muslim in Assam, *Hājo* played a significant role since 13th century A.D. but it was from the beginning of the 17th century A.D. that the area became more popular to them when the Muslim rulers consolidated their position. The Muslims played a decisive part in the socio-political activities of the area. It was by this time that a shrine called *Poa mecca* was marked as an important centre of Islamic religion and culture. Das, P.C: *The Blessed Land*, p.2.

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are being worshipped.<sup>20</sup> It also provides detailed description about the Hayagrīva on the *Maṇikūṭa* hill. The mountains *Maṇikūṭa* and *Gandhamādana* of *Bhadrāśvavarṣa*<sup>21</sup>, through which the river *lauhitya* passes, is the place where Viṣṇu in his Hayagrīva form killed not only the feverous demon Jvarāśura but also the demon Hayagrīva in his equine form. After slaying the demon, Jvarāśura, the compassionate Lord Viṣṇu in Hayagrīva form took rest at *Maṇikūṭa* hill for the welfare of all beings. He then had a healing bath in a nearby lake known as '*apunarbhava*',<sup>22</sup> because a dip into it puts an end to rebirth. The legend of Viṣṇu in the form of Hayagrīva, killing Jvarāśura is different from the earlier and other legends relating to Hayagrīva. Some say that the killing of Jvarāśura by Viṣṇu Hayagrīva symbolised the expulsion of the Buddhist hold over the *vaiṣṇava* cult. It may be noted here that N.K. Bhattasali has referred to two images of the Pāla period found in Dacca. The main goddesses in both the sculptures are the Buddhist deity Parṇaśavarī. In one sculpture two divinities occupy the right and the left sides. One is Hayagrīva, the Hindu god, the presiding deity of fever and the other is Sītālā, the Hindu goddess, presiding deity of small pox.<sup>23</sup> On the other sculpture these deities are depicted as flying to escape the wrath of the Buddhist goddess Vajrayoginī who is destroyer of all

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<sup>20</sup> The fish incarnation is worshipped in the *Matsyadhvaja* mount to the east of *Maṇikūṭa*, Mādhava in the form of *Bhairava* named *Pāṇḍunātha* in *Rakṣakūṭa*, the boar incarnation in the *Chitrakūṭa* mount, *Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa* in the *Dikkaravāsini* etc. *KāP*, 81.75; 82.50, 65,74; 83/90.

<sup>21</sup> The Viṣṇu (2.2.17; 2.2.22; 2.2.49), *Mārkaṇḍeya* (Tr. Pargiter, text 59.8-10, p. 388 ) and *Vāyupurāṇas* (5.45; 54.96,100,132) associates *Bhadrāśvavarṣa* with horse-headed Viṣṇu.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, 78/74-78.

<sup>23</sup> Bhattasali, N.K: *Iconography of Buddhists and Brahmanical Scriptures in the Dacca Museum, Dacca*, pp. 60-61.

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diseases. These two images speak of the *sādhana* most precisely in all details.<sup>24</sup>

A poetical work written in Assamese language by Sri Ramchandra Barapatra (1686 A.D) under the name *Maṇikūṭa*, is another account of Hayagrīva Mādhava. According to this account, once a sage named Ūrba, while meditating in the *Maṇikūṭa* hill, was disturbed by Hayāsura, Jvarāsura and three other *asuras*. The sage prayed to Lord Viṣṇu to save him from the demons' hands. Then Viṣṇu came to the rescue of the sage and killed the *asuras*. When Viṣṇu was ready to conquer Hayāsura the demon begged the Lord to reside at that place. Viṣṇu fulfilled the demon's request, remained at *Maṇikūṭa* and thereafter the sage established the temple, which was known as Hayagrīva Mādhava temple.

There is another version in the *Kālikāpurāṇa* regarding the killing of a demon Hayagrīva, Viśvanātha the Lord of the world (*Jagatpatih*) is said to have fought against Hayagrīva and after killing the demon, he migrated to *Maṇikūṭa*. However, it is not clear whether the Lord of the world is referred to as Lord Viṣṇu or Śiva. The context appears to have pointed at Śiva as the killer of Hayagrīva.<sup>25</sup> But *Yoginītantra* simply states that Viṣṇu resides on the *Maṇikūṭa* in the form of Hayagrīva.

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<sup>24</sup> Bhattacharyya, B: *The Indian Buddhist Iconography*, p. 232-233.

<sup>25</sup> B.Kakati: *Aspects of Early Assamese Literature*, pp-71-72.

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3. Legend behind the origin of Hayagrīva Mādhava idol:

The *Yoginī Tantra* gives a description about the stone image of Hayagrīva Mādhava.<sup>26</sup> Śiva narrates to Devī Pārvatī about the ancient legend behind the establishment of the stone image of Hayagrīva Mādhava. A legend goes that, the king of Orissa, Indradyumna wished to create a perfect idol of the Lord Viṣṇu.<sup>27</sup> Viṣṇu was satisfied by this attitude and appeared before the king in his dream<sup>28</sup> and advised him to cut one big tree that would come floating at the seashore in the early morning, into seven pieces for making the idol.<sup>29</sup> As advised in the dream, the king found the tree on the seashore—

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<sup>26</sup> *YT*, 2.9.221-245.

<sup>27</sup> “Pravṛtte ca mahāyajñe prāsāde devanirmmite/  
Cintayārtto mahīpālaḥ pratimārthamaharṇniśaṃ//  
Kenopāyena deveśaṃ sarvveśaṃ lokabhāvanaṃ/  
Sargasthityantakarttāraṃ paśyāmi puruṣottamaṃ//  
Cintāduḥkhamayo rājā divārātrau na śerate/  
Na bhunkte vividhān bhogān na ca snānaṃ prasādhanaṃ//  
Śailaśṛṅgastarurvāpi praśasto vā mahītale/  
Viṣṇoḥ pratimāyogyāya sarvalakṣaṇalakṣitaḥ//” *YT*, 2.9.220-223.

<sup>28</sup> “Dadarśa sa tu bhūpālo devadevaṃ jagadguruṃ/  
Śaṅkhacakraadharaṃ devaṃ gadāpadmāgrapāṇinaṃ//  
Yugāntādityavarṇābhaṃ nīlavaiduryasannibhaṃ/  
Suparṇa prṣṭhamāśinaṃ ṣoḍaśārddhabhūjaṃ śubhaṃ//  
Kratunānena dānena dhiyā bhaktyā ca te nṛpa/  
Tuṣṭa’smi te mahīpāla tvayā kimanuśocasi//” *YT*, 2.9.227-229.

<sup>29</sup> “Yadatra pratimāṃ rājan jagatpūjyāṃ sanātānīm/  
Sthāpayiṣyasi he dhīra tadupāyaṃ vṛvīmi te//  
Sāgarasya jalasyānte nānādhumavibhūṣite/  
Velābhir’nyamānastu na cāsau kampate drumah//  
Paraśuhastasthāmādāya ūrmimantu tato vrajet/

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“Vyāharaṇ vaiṣṇavaṃ mantramuktañcaiva tadātmakam/  
Prabhātāyāṃ rjanyāstu sa tato’nanyamānasah//  
Sa snātvā sāgare ramie yathāsamyag vidhānataḥ/  
Taṃ dadarśa mahāvṛkṣaṃ yathā tejasvīnaṃ drumam//  
Mohāntakam durāroham puṇyaṃ viphalameva ca/  
Mahocchrāyaṃ mahākāyaṃ prasuptaṇca jalāntike//”<sup>30</sup>

The king then cut it into seven pieces<sup>31</sup> from which he was to make the idols. The main part of the tree was established in Orissa as Jagannāth; two pieces of the sacred wood were taken to *Kāmarūpa*, and one piece was brought over to *Maṇikūṭa* hill, to be converted later into an image of Hayagrīva Mādhava—

“Odradeśe Mūlabhāgaṃ kalpayāmāsa vai vibhuḥ/  
Tadūrdhvakhaṇḍam kāśmīre kavandhākāra ca//  
Ādityaṃ taṃ vijānīyāt rāmeṇa sthāpitaṃ ca/  
Śoṇādityaṃ tadūrdhvaṅgaṃ śukreṇa sthāpitaṃ priye//  
Śīlārūpaṃ maheśāni sthāpitaṃ guruṇā tataḥ/  
Bhāgadvayaṃ kāmarūpe bhāgaikaṃ malaye girau//  
Maṇikūṭe tatorddhvaṇca sthāpitaṃ varuṇena hi/

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Ekākī viharan rājan satyaṃ paśyasi pādapaṃ//  
Iti kañcait samālicya chedayannaviśaṅkitaḥ/  
Paścimāyatanam bṛkṣaṃ prātaradbhutadarśanaṃ/  
Chitvā tailarasaṃ datvā tadā bhūpāla cānaya//  
Kuru tatpratimāṃ divyāṃ jahi cintāṃ vimohinīm/  
Evamuktva mahāvāhurgato’darśanaṃ hariḥ//” *YT*, 2.9.230-234.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, 2.9.236-238.

<sup>31</sup> “Paraśunā śātayāmāsa niśātanatayaiva hi/

Saptadhā drumarājantaṃ nipapāta mahītale//” *YT*, 2.9.240.

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Prācyāṃ nandīśamaisānye matsyākṣo nāma Mādhavaḥ//  
Śilāmayo dārumayaḥ kuverēṇaiva sthāpitaḥ/  
Mahāvarāhanāmā ca yo'ṣṭādaśabhujairyutaḥ//<sup>32</sup>

All these three idols are made of stony wood. Here an attempt is seen to integrate the Jagannātha temple of Orissa with the Hayagrīva Mādhava of *Hājo*.

The story about the origin of the stone image of Hayagrīva Mādhava is similar to the account of the wooden images of Kṛṣṇa, Balabhadra and Subhadrā is mentioned in the *Brahmapurāṇa*. Interestingly, *Yoginītantra* has been strongly influenced by the *Brahmapurāṇa* so much so that the ultimate chapter of this tantra runs simply to be copied from this *purāṇa*. Maheśvara Neog has enlisted the examined śloka in his article “*The worship of Hayagrīva*.”<sup>33</sup> Ramachandra Barpatra also repeats the same story in his work ‘*Maṇikūṭa*’.<sup>34</sup>

#### 4. Iconographical descriptions of Hayagrīva :

*YT* gives some ideas about the iconographic descriptions of Hayagrīva. The *mūlamantra* exposes Hayagrīva as endowed with thousand arms and thousand rays of light and as an image of the very universe:

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<sup>32</sup> *YT*, 2.9.21-245.

<sup>33</sup> The following śloka may be examined by Neog: *YT*.II.9.168-169 (*BraP*, 60.23-24) ; *YT*.II.9.174 (*BraP*, 61.24); *YT*.II.9.175 (*BraP*, 61.25 with change in the first line); *YT*.II.9.176 (*BraP*, 61.26 slight change in the first line); *YT*.II.9.177-184 (*BraP*, 61.27-33, 37, 38); *YT*.II.9.185-190 (*BraP*, 61.39-46 with slight significant changes); *YT*.II.9.190-199 (*BraP*, 61.47-55). Neog. Maheśvara: *Hayagrīva Worship in Assam. The Journal of Oriental Research. Vol. XXII. p.31.*

<sup>34</sup> Goswami. Hemachandra: *Asamiya Sahityar Chaneki, Vol. II, Part. III, p.844-944.*

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“Sahasravāhave      sahasraraśmi      pravarāya      vedhase  
hayāsyarūpāya/

Namo vedhase hayāsyarūpāya namo Namaste//”<sup>35</sup>

He is also four armed with a boon giving pose or *Varada mūdṛā*<sup>36</sup>, a noose or *pāśa*, a book or *pustaka* and a white lotus or *sitasaroja* in his hands, with white complexion as like the moon and is seated on a lotus.<sup>37</sup> Those who are not aware of the mantra for the worship of the idol, would say, “*Om namo Hiranyagarbhāya*,” and worship the great god.

We also find the description of Hayagrīva image in the *dhyāna śloka* of *Kālikāpurāṇa* which representing the Lord poised on a white lotus, sometimes on Garuḍa, adorned with jewellery and other ornaments. Of his four arms, two depict the *Varada* and the *Abhaya mudrā*,<sup>38</sup> the postures of granting boon and ensuring safety. The third hand holds a white lotus and the fourth holds a book. This iconographical description of Hayagrīva has a

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<sup>35</sup> YT, 2.9.201.

<sup>36</sup> *Varada mudrā* is the gesture of hands shown by gods while conferring boons. The hand showing this gesture is pendant with its palm outward and fingers all stretched. Bhattacharyya, Benoytosh: *The Indian Buddhist Iconography*, p.441.

<sup>37</sup> “Jayati varadapāśa pustakavystahasto/

Viṛtasitasarakyomokṣhadānaṃ vibhartti/

Śaśadharaśubhasumūrttirbhuktimuktipradāyī/

Praṇatasuranarebhyo vājīvaktro murāriḥ//”YT, 2.9.208.

<sup>38</sup> The gesture of protection. The hand showing this *mudrā* should be slightly elevated and bent with the palm turned outward, the fingers being outstretched and elevated. This *mudrā* should be distinguished from the *Varada mudrā* in which the hand is stretched downwards with the fingers, instead of being elevated, pointed downwards. Bhattacharyya, Benoytosh: *Op. Cit.*, p.432.

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striking resemblance with that of the iconographical description of Hayagrīva Lokeśvara in *Buddhist sādhanās*.<sup>39</sup> Here Hayagrīva Lokeśvara's approach is in benign form—

“The god sits in the *Vajraparyāṅka*<sup>40</sup> attitude on a lotus with four hands. Out of these the principal ones reveal the *Vyākhyāna* pose. The second pair holds the rosary in the right and the lotus in the left.”<sup>41</sup>

Although claimed that the image of Hayagrīva Mādhava was an image of *Mahāmuṇi* Buddha originally, its identity is not yet established beyond all reasonable doubts. The priests hesitate to tell others what the image look like under the cover of the cloths.

### 5.Worship:

Worship generally may be of two kinds— a) without form of image or *Amūrta*, and b) with form of image or *Samūrta*. In the early Vedic age it was primarily in the form of offering *havis*, clarified butter, through fire to the

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<sup>39</sup> “In *Buddhist sādhanās* Hayagrīva is described as a companion of Khaṣarpaṇa along with Tārā and two other deities. He and Tārā are also the two companions of Lokanātha. Heruka and Hayagrīva are two of the nine male deities emanating from Akṣobhya. There are three different forms of Hayagrīva—one with the image of Amitābha on the crown, one bearing Akṣobhya and the third, Paramāśva Hayagrīva.” Maheswara Neog: *The Worship of Hayagrīva*, p.32.

<sup>40</sup> *Vajraparyāṅkāśana* or *Vajrāsana* or *Dhyānāsana* is the meditative pose, the two legs being firmly locked with both the soles apparent, the characteristic sitting attitude of the Dhyāni Buddhas. Sometimes a small thunderbolt, shown on the seat of the god, indicates the meditative attitude. *Dhyānāsana* should be distinguished from the Paryāṅka attitude in which case the legs are placed one upon the other with both the soles invisible. B.Bhattacharya: *The Indian Buddhist Iconography*, p.435.

<sup>41</sup> B.Bhattacharya: *ibid.*, p.177.

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respective god. Later, based on the *amūrta* form of worship, the image worship was developed. This trend had been much blooming in the post Vedic literature and crystallised in the tāntrik texts also.

The deity may be worshiped in two kinds— a) *bāhyapujā* or external and b) *antaraṅgapujā* or internal. The external form of worship or *bāhyapujā* needs an image to which the devotee offers diverse offerings. The form of *bāhyapujā* elements and their number differ on various conditions. In the process of *bāhyapujā* the number of services or *upacāras* may be five or *pañcopacāra*, sixteen or *ṣoḍaśopacāra*, twentyfive or *pañcaviṃśatyopacāra*, thirtysix or *ṣaṭtriṃśadupacāra*. Occasionally one may classify the worship of *yantra*, *śālagrāma* etc. as the external form of worship. The internal worship may be of two kinds— *sādhārapujā* or worship with a symbol and *nirādhārapujā* or worship without symbol.

The *Yoginī Tantra* gives an elaborate idea about the worship of Hayagrīva. The idol of Hayagrīva is to be bathed with *mūlamantra* and with perfumed water.<sup>42</sup> *Udvartana* or rubbing with perfumed sesame oil should be performed everyday to the deity.<sup>43</sup> The idol should be brushed properly with a bunch of *Nalapuṣpa*, *Kuśa*, *Cāmara* etc.<sup>44</sup> Then it should be clothed and then decorated with jewels and given *tilaka*'s or marks with *Malaya-candana*, *gopī-candana* etc. on the forehead of the idol.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *YT*,2.9.130.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*,2.9.142.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*,2.9.144-150.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*,2.9.153b-157.

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*YT* gives a detailed description of various *mantras*,<sup>46</sup> *nyāsa*,<sup>47</sup> practice of *mudrā*<sup>48</sup> and *japa*<sup>49</sup> performed by devotees during the worship of the deity. In *nyāsa* it is to be visualised that the Vāsudeva, Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Trivikrama inhabit on the eastern, southern, western and north eastern petals of the mental lotus respectively.<sup>50</sup> Garuḍa should be assigned a place in front of Vāsudeva and his club, goddess earth, Dharma and Śrī Lakṣmī to his right side. To the left side his bow along with *veda*, *puṣṭi*, *vanamālā*<sup>51</sup>, *śrīvatsya*<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> The Sanskrit word mantra consists of the root *man-* ‘to think’ and the suffix- *tra*, designating tools or instruments; hence a literal translation would be ‘instrument of thought’. Jan Gonda, a widely cited scholar on Indian mantras, defines mantra as general name for the verses, formulas or sequence of words in prose which contain praise, are believed to have religious, magical or spiritual efficiency, which are meditated upon, recited, muttered or sung in a ritual, and which are collected in the methodically arranged ancient texts of Hinduism. Harvey Alper: *Understanding Mantras*, p.9.

<sup>47</sup> Monier Monier Williams: *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p.572.

<sup>48</sup> *Mudrā* is a symbolic or ritual gesture in Hinduism and Buddhism. *Mudrā* is used in the iconography of Hindu and Buddhist art of Indian subcontinent and described in the scriptures, such as *Nāṭyaśāstra*. One hundred and eight *mudrās* are used in regular *tāntrik* rituals. *ibid.*, p.822.

<sup>49</sup> *Japa* is the meditative repetition of a mantra or a divine name. It is a practice found in Buddhism and Hinduism. The Sanskrit word *japa* is derived from the root *jap* meaning ‘to utter in a low voice, repeat internally, mutter.’ Monier Williams states that the term appears in Vedic literature such as in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* and the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. The term means muttering, whispering or murmuring passages from the scripture, or charms, or names of deity. *ibid.*, p.412.

<sup>50</sup> *YT*, 2.9.185.

<sup>51</sup> A garland of flowers or a chaplet worn by Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu. Williams, M. Monier: *A Sanskrit English Dictionary*, p.918.

<sup>52</sup> *Śrīvatsya* is an ancient symbol considered auspicious in Indian traditions. Das, Sarat Chandra: *Tibetan English Dictionary with Sanskrit Synonyms*, p. 69.

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and *kaustubha*<sup>53</sup> should be placed over his breast.<sup>54</sup> After this, Vāsudeva should be worshipped outside the holy circle and the planets and gods of direction should also be presented with offerings of flowers.<sup>55</sup>

After the worship *mudrā* and *japa* should be practised. In the *japa*, *mantras* like *puruṣasukta mantra*<sup>56</sup>, the twelve syllable *bīja*<sup>57</sup> *mantra*, the *bīja mantra* of Kṛṣṇa, and Viṣṇu mantras<sup>58</sup> and different mantras for *āvāhana* of the deity<sup>59</sup>, offering each of oblations (*arghya*), bestowals of water for washing the feet (*pādya*), offering of curd with honey or butter (*madhuparka*), water

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<sup>53</sup> A celebrated jewel obtained with thirteen other precious things at the churning of the ocean and suspended on the breast of Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu. Williams, M. Monier: *Op. Cit.*, p.318.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, 2.9.186-188.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, 2.9.189-190.

<sup>56</sup> “Om namo nārāyaṇeti ye vadanti manīṣiṇaḥ/  
Kiṃ kāryaṃ vahumantrairvā mantrairvibhramakāraṇaiḥ//  
Om namo nārāyaṇeti mantraḥ sarvvārthasādhakaḥ/  
Yajamstenaiva mantreṇa sūktena puruṣeṇa vā//” *YT*, 2.9.168-169.

<sup>57</sup> *Bīja* means a seed. In tantra it signifies the germ syllable which takes the form of a deity in course of meditation. B.Bhattacharya: *Op. Cit.*, p.433.

<sup>58</sup> “Dvādaśākṣaravījēna kṛṣṇavījēna pūjayet/  
Vystena ca samastena anulomavilomakaiḥ/  
Prayuktairvahubhirmantairmantreṇa vaiṣṇavena ca/  
Tatrārkaśāstravahnīnāṃ maṇḍalāni vicintayet/  
Tato vicintya hṛdayaṃ omkāraṃ jyotirūpiṇaṃ/  
Kārṇikāyāṃ samāsīnaṃ jyotirūpasvarūpiṇaṃ/  
Aṣṭākṣaraṃ tato mantraṃ pravādanti yathākramaṃ//” *ibid.*, 2.9.170-171.

<sup>59</sup> “Mīnarūpo varāhaśca nārasimho ’thavā punaḥ/  
Āyātu devo varado mama nārāyaṇo ’grataḥ//  
Sumeroḥ pādapīṭhe ca padmakalpitamāsaṇaṃ/  
Sarvasatvahiṭyārtha tiṣṭha tvaṃ madhusūdana//” *ibid.*, 2.9.174-175.

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for sipping (*ācamanīya*), offering of water for bathing (*snāna*), offering scented material for anointing (*vilepana*), and offering of food (*naivedya*).<sup>60</sup> The mantras begins with ‘om’ and connected with ‘*namaḥ*’ are defined as the best mantras.<sup>61</sup> The *mūla mantra* is to be pronounced eight, twenty eight or one hundred and eight times. The *japa* should be repeated a lac or a crore of times, when a particular end is to be attained. *Mudrās* are eight in number like *śrīvatsya*, *padma*, *śaṅkha*, *gadā*, *garuḍa*, *cakra*, *candra* and *śāraṅga*. These are mostly the weapons and ornaments of Viṣṇu.<sup>62</sup>

*YT* also gives a long list of different types of fruits,<sup>63</sup> vegetables,<sup>64</sup> varieties of paddy<sup>65</sup> and flesh of birds<sup>66</sup> which could be offered to the god. Cow milk, fish

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<sup>60</sup> “Trailokyapatīnāṃ pataye devadevāya/  
Arghyo’yaṃ hr̥ṣīkeśāya viṣṇave namaḥ//  
Svapādyam pādayerdeva padmanābha sanātana/  
Viṣṇo kamalapatrākṣa gṛhāṇ madhusūdana//  
Madhuparkam mahādeva brahmādaiḥ kalpitam tava/  
Mayā niveditam bhaktyā gṛhāṇ puruṣottama//  
Mandyaḥkinyāstu te vāri jalapānam harāśubham/  
Gṛhāṇācamanīyam tvam mayā bhaktyā niveditam//  
Tvamāpaḥ pṛthivī caiva jyotistvam vahnireva ca/  
Lokasamvittimātreṇa vāriṇā snāpayāmyaham//  
Daravastrasamāyukte yajñavarṇa vibhūṣite/  
svarṇavarṇaprabhedena vāsasī tava keśava//  
Śarīram te lepayāmi ceṣṭāsvaiva ca keśava/  
Mayā niveditān gandhān pratigṛhya vilipyatām//” *ibid.*, 2.9.176-182.

<sup>61</sup> “Omkārādisamāyukto namaskārapradīpitaḥ/  
Sāraśca sarvvatattvānāṃ mantra ityābhadhīyate//” *ibid.*, 2.9.194.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*, 2.9.195-199.

<sup>63</sup> “Hayākyo maṇikūṭe mādhavākhyo vyavasthitaḥ/  
Sambhavaḥ kathito devī prāpaṇam ṣṇu pārvvatī//

and meat of deer, goat, *śālana* and hare are to be offered to Viṣṇu.<sup>67</sup> Buffalo's meat, milk and ghee are to be avoided.<sup>68</sup> Certain bird's meat can

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Ingudīphalavilvāni vadarāmalakāni ca/  
Karjjuraṃ panasañcaiva tathā tālaphalāni ca//  
Dāḍimaṃ kadalīñcaiva prayatnena niyojayet/  
Lakucaṃ madhukaṃ yuktaṃ tathā pūgaphalāni ca/  
Vijapurañca madhuraṃ karkandhūñca nivedayet//”YT, 2.9.246-248.

<sup>64</sup> “Mūlakasya ca śākañca rājakasya tathaiva ca/  
Phalaṃ yasya viśālañca tasya śākaṃ prarohakaṃ//  
Vāstukasya ca śākañca pālaṅgasya mama priye/  
Vilayāni priyāṇyanyān tathā ca tintidīphalaṃ//  
Kuṣmāṇḍaṃ pārvvatīyañca tathā cāraṇasambhavaṃ/  
Kadalaṃ vijapūrañca rāmakam pautrakantathā/  
Akālapanasañcaiva tathānyadapi varjjayet//”*ibid.*, 2.9.249-251.

<sup>65</sup> “Dhānyānāñca pravakṣyāmi upayogāñśca śāṅkari/  
Ekacittaṃ samādhāya prāpaṇaṃ śṛṇu pārvvati//  
Somadhānyaṃ vṛhaddhānyaṃ raktaśālikameva ca/  
Rājadhānyaṃ ṣaṣṭikañca devavallabhakantathā//  
Caṇakaṃ kodravañcaiva varjjayenmama sundari/  
Kṣārañca kṛṣṇkṣīrañca varṇaṃca mārṭtikodbhavaṃ//”*ibid.*, 2.9.252-254.

<sup>66</sup> “Pakṣiṇāñca pravakṣyāmi ye prajojyā mama priye/  
Hārītañca mayūrañca nāyakaṃ vārttakantathā//  
Kapilaścaiva cāśaśca kākakukkuṭakau śīraḥ/  
Vanyakukkuṭaścaiva śārāruśca kapotakaḥ//  
Vilvakaḥ kulikaścaiva raktapucchaśca ṭiṭibhaḥ  
Kṛṣṇamatsyāśanañcaiva patriṇāṃ ca viśiṣyate//”*ibid.*, 2.9.258-260.

<sup>67</sup> “Yena yānyupabhogyāni gavyaṃ devi payomṛtaṃ/  
Mārgaṃ mātṣyaṃ tathā chāgaṃ śālanam śāśakantathā//”*ibid.*, 2.9.256.

<sup>68</sup> “Etaistu prāpaṇaṃ dadyādviṣṇoścaiva priyāvahaṃ/  
Māhiṣaṃ varjjayenmāṇsaṃ kṣīraṃ dadhi ghṛtantataḥ//”*ibid.*, 2.9.257.

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also be offered.<sup>69</sup> It proposed the theory of *Mahāsukhavāda*<sup>70</sup> and admitted five ‘*ma’kāras*, wine, women, fish, meat and all kinds of exciting food as essential for the devotees, which are somehow emulated once upon a time in the ritualistic performances of Hayagrīva Mādhava. The worshipper is expected to be well versed in mantra and tantra.<sup>71</sup> It appears from the above account given in the *Yoginī-tānta* that there was *tāntrik* influence on the Hayagrīva worship in early times.

But with the wave of *bhakti*<sup>72</sup> movement under the leadership of Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavdeva in 15th and 16th century A.D. spread in

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<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, 2.9.255-264.

<sup>70</sup> When through the yogic process one enters into the state of supreme bliss or *Mahāsukha*, the whole world becomes of the form of unique emotion in the name of *Mahāsukha* and through this unique emotion of bliss the whole world as static and dynamic becomes one. It has been extensively used in many of the Buddhist as well as Hindu *tāntrik* texts to signify the union of *Prajñā* and *Upāya* or of the Śakti and Śiva. In the *tāntrik* Buddhism the idea of *Mahāsukha* evolved from the idea of *nirvāṇa* in the earlier Buddhism. *Nirvāṇa* is described frequently in the tantras as incessant bliss *satala sukhamaya*, the place of both enjoyment and liberation, changeless supreme bliss, the seed of all substances, the ultimate state of those who have attained perfection, the highest place of the Buddhas, called the *sukhāvātī*. Gradually the idea of *Mahāsukha* began to acquire cosmological and ontological significance in the various schools of *tāntrik* Buddhism. Dasgupta, Shashibhusan: *Obscure Religious Cults; as Background of Bengali Literature*, pp.35-37.

<sup>71</sup> “Haviṣyāśī śucirbhūtvā mantratantraviṣāradaḥ/

Aharniṣaṃ japedvidyāṃ tadgatenāntarātmanā/” *ibid.*, 2.9.266.

<sup>72</sup> Devotion of supreme self is one of the three main traditional paths to the ultimate, alongside *jñāna* and *karma yoga*; *bhakti* and *jñāna* in most schools and texts are seen as complementary, emphasis occasionally being given to one or the other. Brown, C.

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Assam, the rites of the Hayagrīva Mādhava temple appears to have had some vital changes. Apparently the daily rituals came to be emulating on *vaiṣṇava sattrā* rituals. The cult of Viṣṇu worship was completely transformed by removing the puzzling rites that crept into it. The two *vaiṣṇava* saints had to wage a sort of hundred year's conflict with the *tāntrik* Buddhism in Viṣṇu worship. Nevertheless, in the movement of the renovation some elements of Buddhism were absorbed in Neo-*vaiṣṇavism* as well.<sup>73</sup> One of the symphonies in the evangelism and institutional tradition of Buddhism and Neo-*vaiṣṇavism* is the fundamental doctrine of *ahiṃsā* i.e., non-violence. The conception of equality impartial of caste is common to both the sects.<sup>74</sup> P. C. Choudhury thinks that the *sattrā* institute of the *vaiṣṇava* cult of Assam is also based on Buddhist ideals.<sup>75</sup>

The work '*Maṇikūṭa*' also follows the *YT* and gives names of fruits, vegetables and grains, but avoids any mention of animal food. The custom of making such exciting offerings had probably ceased when that text was written. It is evident from the accounts given in the "*Maṇikūṭa*," composed by Rāmacandra Barapātra in 1608 and the "*Lakṣmipati Caritra*" written by Jaya Nārāyaṇa in early eighteenth century, that *vaiṣṇava* rituals were performed in the temple. The rituals included congregational prayers, reciting of hymns, rendering of the Gītā and devotional songs along with the vegetable offerings to deity. In the Assamese biographical literature, it is

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Mackenzie: *The Triumph of The Goddess; The Canonical Models and Theological Visions of the Devī-Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, p.227.

<sup>73</sup> Choudhury, P.C: *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D.*, p.413.

<sup>74</sup> Goswami, S.C: *Journal of Assam Research Society* Vol.I, No.2, p.49.

<sup>75</sup> Choudhury, P.C: 'loc. cit.' p.413.

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stated that the chief preacher of Śaṅkaradeva visited the Mādhava temple and recited various *ślokas* in honour to Hayagrīva. Another Vaiṣṇava saint Dāmodaradeva visited the temple. Here he recited and explained the Gītā. The two elder brothers of Dāmodaradeva were appointed as propounder of the Bhāgavata in the temple that clearly indicates the *vaiṣṇava* influence the Mādhava temple at *Hājo*.

Although now a day's Hayagrīva Mādhava is known as a *vaiṣṇava* god but the worship of Hayagrīva Mādhava was significantly influenced by *tāntrik* tradition. This is why meat of different animals along with vegetables and fruits used to be offered to the deity. Such textual evidence is very important to provide information regarding *tāntrik* tradition of the worship of Hayagrīva Mādhava which was prevalent sometimes, but subsequently the tradition changed.

As referred to in the early texts, the antiquity of Hayagrīva can also be drawn to Agni or Dadhikrā who was adored in the form of horse. The horse cult is very ancient and later it came to be identified with Hayagrīva worship as can be seen at *Hājo*. Moreover, Hayagrīva is not only esteemed as a Brāhmanical god but as a Buddhist god also who is believed to be the god of knowledge, learning and wisdom. It is not unbelievable that this cult of Hayagrīva worship spreaded over to China and Japan<sup>76</sup> at a very early period also and that the present practice of the Buddhists coming from Bhutan and Tibet for worship in the Hayagrīva Mādhava temple in *Hājo* happens to be a continuance of this tradition.

The present day temple tells us that the practices are influenced more by *vaiṣṇava* movements, particularly by Śaṅkaradeva and others. The *vaiṣṇava*

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<sup>76</sup> Ghosh, J.C: *Journal of Assam Research Society*, Vol.V, No.3, p.84.

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element of the present day worship of the deity forbids all non vegetarian offerings typical to the tantric tradition. Kakati remarks that Hayagrīva is not sufficiently a god in Hindu pantheon to merit worship and a temple but he occupies high reputation in the Buddhist tantras and in the Buddhist pantheon. Sri Choudhury remarks that the existing ruins indicate that the temple had been the centre of worship of the deities— Sūrya, Viṣṇu, Buddha as well as the deities of *tāntrik* lineage.

#### 6.History:

Like many other temples of India, Hayagrīva Mādhava temple received attention and patronisation from different kings of Assam. The king *Naranārāyaṇa* first discovered the temple in a deserted forest. Then he donated land for the refurbished temple and provided the temple with priests, musicians and *devadāsīs* in 1550.<sup>77</sup> Later in 1583 A.D. Raghudeva, the king of *Kāmarūpa* (1581-93), reconstructed the temple. It is still not known who had first built the Hayagrīva Mādhava temple at *Hājo*. But there may be more than one reason for severe damages of the temple. Firstly, there might have occurred some earthquake to crumble down the beautiful temple. Secondly, some think that, *Kālāpāhāra*, the general of Sulaiman Karrani, the ruler of Bengal (1563-1572), invaded Assam and demolished the remains of an older shrine at *Hājo* and other place at Kāmākhyā.<sup>78</sup> Afterwards the Koch king Raghudeva, rebuilt the Hayagrīva Mādhava temple at *Hājo*. When the temple was reconstructed, much of the ancient relics of the erstwhile temple got replaced so much so that its antiquity cannot be determined. In this context L.W. Shakespear says,

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<sup>77</sup> E.T. Dalton: *Notes on Assam temple ruins*, p.10.

<sup>78</sup> Gait, E.A: *A History of Assam*, p.63.

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“At *Hājo* once an important place of Moghul role and opposite Gauhati, six or seven miles from the river, on a wood hill 300 feet high stands a remarkable and celebrated temple containing a large image of Buddha six feet high and cut from a solid block of black stone.”<sup>79</sup>

According to the Buddhist tradition of Tibet, the older shrine was the great *caitya*<sup>80</sup> erected over the cremated relic of the *Tathāgatas*<sup>81</sup> body. The principal stone image of the shrine called Mādhava by the Hindus, is considered by the *Lāmās* to be *Mahāmuṇi* or Buddha and the temple itself is taken by them as a *Buddhist caitya*. Some says that Buddha attained

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<sup>79</sup> L.W. Shakespear: *History of Upper Assam, Upper Burmah and North-Eastern Frontier*, pp72-73.

<sup>80</sup> *Caitya* or *stūpa* representing the Buddhist Universe is the Buddhist sanctuary, sometimes square and sometimes round, with spires or steps on the capital. Each spire or step represents a heaven, the uppermost portion being a point which is supposed to be highest peak of mount Sumeru, a mythical mountain, whence the *Bodhicitta* loses itself in *śunya*. On the four sides of the *caitya* the figures of the Dhyāni Buddhas appear. Vairocana is sometimes present. The corners are occupied by the figures of the divine Buddhaśaktis or their symbolic representations in the form of *yantras*. The *caitya* may show further, in the four cardinal points, the *Caturmahārājikas* or the great rulers of the quarters, namely Vaiśravaṇa, Virūpākṣa, Virūḍhaka and Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Bhattacharyya, Benoytosh: *Op.Cit.*, p.434.

<sup>81</sup> *Tathāgatas*, the Buddhas who have attained the highest state of perfection according to the Buddhists. In the *sādhanaṃālā*, the word is used in the plural number with references to the five Dhyāni Buddhas, but does not even signify Vajrasattva or Vajradhara. The Buddhas are innumerable and have a hierarchy among them, the different orders being Pratyeka, Śrāvaka, Samyak-Sambuddha, Jaina, Arhat, Tathāgata and the like. Bhattacharyya, Benoytosh: *ibid.*, p.440.

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*Mahāparinirvāṇa* at a place called *Maṇikūṭa*.<sup>82</sup> It is surmised that one Buddhist saint, Padmasambhava<sup>83</sup> died at *Hājo* in eighth century A.D. and a *caitya* was built over his ashes there.<sup>84</sup> In support of this view, references can be made to a Tibetan rock-cut inscription of the Buddhist mystic sentence “*Om Maṇi Padme Hum, Om ah hum, Om*”, etc., on a flattish rock at a distance from the Hayagrīva Mādhava temple.<sup>85</sup> The word ‘*Padme*’ possibly stands here for Padmasambhava.<sup>86</sup> Dr. Waddell, a British scholar, basing on Hiuen Tsang’s report, suggests that any *caitya* or Buddhist building in *Hājo*

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<sup>82</sup> On the basis of the accounts of the Chinese travellers Sir A.Cunningham, Hiuen Tsang and Fa-Hien, identified the place of the *mahāparinirvāṇa* of Buddha as Kusinagara or Kusanagar in Gorakhpur, one hundred and twenty miles north east of Benares in Uttar Pradesh. But Waddell gives a different view about the place of the *mahāparinirvāṇa*. In this regard he refers to the Tibetan word “rTsamch’oggron” which means ‘the town of Kuśa grass as given in the “Kah-’gyur”. On the basis of this translation, Waddell tries to establish that Buddha’s *Mahāparinirvāṇa* took place not in Kuśinagara but in Saulkuchi, a village near *Hājo*. According to him ‘Sualkuchi’ is derived from the words ‘Śāl’ and ‘Kuśa’. ‘Śāl’ is a tree and the ‘Kuśa’ is a sacrificial grass grown in Assam, it is also said that Buddha died between two Śāl trees. He therefore, believes that the *Mahāparinirvāṇa* took place in Śāl-Kuśa or Sualkuchi and not in Kuśinagara. Waddell, L.A: *The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism*, pp.307-308.

<sup>83</sup> Padmasambhava is referred to as an Indian Buddhist monk from *Nālanda* who introduced Tantrik Buddhism in Bhutan in the middle of the 8th century A.D. This Indian Buddhist Siddha is also associated with the establishment of the faith in Tibet by about 770 A.D. He was considered as the Second Buddha in Tibet, and is worshipped in Bhutan and Tibet along with the Buddha almost in all the monasteries. He is called the Guru Rimpoche. Conze, Edward: *Buddhism*, p.60.

<sup>84</sup> P.C. Chaudhury: *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D.*, p.402.

<sup>85</sup> L.A. Waddell: *Buddhism & Lamaism of Tibet*, p. 310.

<sup>86</sup> P.C. Chaudhury: ‘loc.cit.’ p. 402.

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must be subsequent to the seventh century. It probably had been visited by the great Padmasambhava founder of *Lāmāism*, or his followers.<sup>87</sup> He also says that Padmasambhava was the propagator of *tāntrik* and demonical cult of Buddhism which was prevalent in Bhutan. In Tibetan works Padmasambhava's visit to *Kāmarūpa* is mentioned.<sup>88</sup> Incidentally, it may be noted here that the Bhutanese *lamas* visiting the Hayagrīva Mādhava temple at *Hājo* worship the idol on the extreme right of Hayagrīva image as Guru Rimpoche or call it as "Nomo Guru" which, according to them, is Padmasambhava. Local Brahmin priests call it as Gurur Om Poche. In winter season the Bhutanese *lamas* visit *Hājo* and worship the *Mahāmuṇi*.<sup>89</sup> They have a belief that Gautama Buddha, the *Mahāmuṇi*, attained *Mahāparinirvāṇa* here. Some of them even burn a thumb or finger of the hand as an offering to the deity. This is a general *tāntrik* mode of worship symbol of self immolation in the name of a deity.<sup>90</sup>

#### 7. Description of the Shrine structure:

The temple is a bold structure made of stone. Its vertical altitude consists of three parts: the high basement, the middle portion and the *Śikhara*. Like many other temples there are beautifully executed moulding, a row of elephants or *gajaratha*, each about twenty inches in height and facing outside, apparently at the base all around the temple (Plate:V.d). The trunks of all the elephant are designed and successively broken and are repaired to give them the original look. Probably this repairing was done during the

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<sup>87</sup> L.A. Waddall: *Op. Cit.*, pp. 307-314.

<sup>88</sup> Maheswara Neog: *Purani Asomer Samaj Aru Sanskriti*, p. 44.

<sup>89</sup> Assam Information, Vol.VII, N0.10, 1956, p.5.

<sup>90</sup> Maheswara Neog: *Buddhism in Kāmarūpa. IHQ*, Vol- XXVII, p.150.

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temple's restoration by Raghudeva.<sup>91</sup> P.C. Sarma states that the elephants' images are of special significance in that these rock-cut designs and a few other features bear great resemblance with that of the *Kailāśa* of *Ellora*, an 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. temple.<sup>92</sup> From the base to a height of six feet, the architectural work tells of a high degree of precision and fineness of the designer. Above the elephant designs, the upper wall of the exterior of the temple is decorated with beautiful sculptured statues (Plate:V). Here ten *avatāras* are represented along with Buddha. The rest of the figures are of an unremarkable character. According to the *lāmās* these figures were originally inside the temple but were ejected by the Buddha.<sup>93</sup> The upper portion or *śikhara* is like a pyramidal dome which contains right up to a pinnacle point. The dome of the temple is believed to be a later medieval restoration. It appears that the upper and lower parts of the temple were rebuilt at two different times.

The plinth of the temple is built of stone and contains three features of ancient Indian temple— the *Garbhagrha*, *Antarāla* and *Maṇḍapa*. The horizontal aspect of the temple in addition to the *garbhagrha* and the roomy chamber, attached through an *antarāla* to the temple is called the '*Maṇḍapa*' which built with stone blocks and flat roofs and resting on massive brick pillars. This part of the temple was also restored. P.C. Sarma mentioned in his work that—

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<sup>91</sup> Cetana, 4th year, Vol.8, 1923, pp.217-218.

<sup>92</sup> Sarma, P.C: *A study of Temple Architecture of Assam from the Gupta period to the end of the Ahom Rule*. Ph.D. Thesis, Gauhati university, 1960, p.71.

<sup>93</sup> *Journal of Assam Research Society*, Vol.II. No. 2, pp.43-44.

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“The restoration of the walls were tried to be made similar with the original one, but it could not be done so.”<sup>94</sup>

According to local residents, 1897 earthquake<sup>95</sup> made the *Maṇḍapa* badly damaged and thereafter it was repaired by the British Government. The *garbhagr̥ha* is a crypt, having floor of stone and containing the idols and pedestal. The doors open into the chamber called *maṇḍapa* made of stone. The stone screen has lotus shaped apertures one on each side for the admission of light and air.<sup>96</sup>

In front of the main temple there is now a big hall built with tin roof and wooden posts. This hall is called the *Nāṭ Mandira* (Plate:VI.d). At the north-west side of the temple, there is a dome or *Doul*<sup>97</sup> (Plate:VI.a) built at a height from the ground with stairway all around it. It was constructed by king Pramatta Singha in 1750 A.D. This *Doul* is referred to by Gait as the *Rāslilā* tower dedicated to the worship of Mādhava during the holi festival, held in the temple.<sup>98</sup> At the north side of the temple there are long stony stairs reaching downwards. There exists a big pond known as *Mādhava Pukhuri* (Plate:III.b). In the *Yoginī Tantra* it is referred to as *Viṣṇpuṣkara*.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Sarma, P.C: *ibid.*, p. 192-193.

<sup>95</sup> Gait refers to six major earthquakes in the years 1548, 1596, 1642, 1663, one during the reign of Ahom king Kudra Singha and another of great intensity in 1897. Gait, K.A: *A History of Assam*, pp.100, 105, 125, 143, 187, 402.

<sup>96</sup> E.T. Dalton: *Op. Cit.*, p.19.

<sup>97</sup> The *Doul* was built during the reign of the Ahom king Pramatta Singha in 1750 A.D. under the supervision of Deka Tarun Duara Barphukan. Neog, M: *Prachya Sasanavali*, Gauhati, p.163.

<sup>98</sup> Gait, E.A: *Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam*, pp.6-7.

<sup>99</sup> *YT*, 2.9.120.

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There are two important platforms in the Hayagrīva Mādhava temple. One of the platforms is called Jogmohan where the Buddhist devotees burn their incense sticks and the other is known as *Nāṭ Mandira* where sometimes the *devadāsīs* used to perform dances. These features signify the richness of the Hayagrīva Mādhava temple, one of the most important temples in Assam. Before entering the main temple people worship the Narasiṃha image that is placed near the gate.

#### 8.Description of the Idols:

In *garbhagrha* of the temple, there are five idols placed in a row with the big stone image of Burā Mādhava or Hayagrīva in the middle, the Dvītīya Mādhava to his left and the Garuḍa in the extreme left; to the right of Hayagrīva there are Calanta Mādhava and Bāsudeva. The main idol Hayagrīva Mādhava or Burā Mādhava is known as Mahāmuni by the Buddhist Lamas. The other images are smaller in size and made of different metals but not of stone as observed by Waddell. The names and arrangement of the idols in the *garbhagrha* as found by Waddell at the time of his visit to the temple and present arrangement of the idols are provided in two consecutive tables as follows.

**Table 2: Names and arrangement of the idols in the *garbhagrha* as found by Waddell**

According to Waddell	Positions of the Idols				
	1 <sup>st</sup> position	2 <sup>nd</sup> position	3 <sup>rd</sup> position	4 <sup>th</sup> position	5 <sup>th</sup> position
Hindu name of the idols	Hayagrīva	Bāsudeva	Lal Kanaya Bankat Vihāre	Mādhava	Dvītīya Mādhava
Buddhist name of the idols	Sencha Muni	Sakya Thuba	Dorje Dolo	Munir Muni Mahāmuni	Ugyan Guru

**Table 3: Names and arrangement of the idols in the *garbhagṛha* as found today**

According to Hindu Priest (interviewed by us)	Positions of the Idols				
	1 <sup>st</sup> position	2 <sup>nd</sup> position	3 <sup>rd</sup> position	4 <sup>th</sup> position	5 <sup>th</sup> position
Hindu Name of the idols	Bāsudeva	Calanta Mādhava	Hayagrīva Mādhava	Dvitīya Mādhava	Garuḍa
Buddhist Name of the idols	Sencha Muni	Dorje Champa	Munir Muni Mahāmuni	Ugyan Guru	Gurur Om Poche

Interestingly the name of the idols according to Waddell and the Hindu priests are different. The name Sakya Thuba is not included by the priest's list while *Gurur Om Poche* is absent from Waddell's list. Again, the name Garuḍa was not mentioned by Waddell but he mentioned two separate idols of Hayagrīva as Senchamuni and Mādhava as Mahāmuni.

The present arrangement places the idol of Hayagrīva Mādhava or Mahāmuni in the centre while in Waddell's description the Hayagrīva or Sencha Muni and Mādhava or Mahāmuni was in the first and fourth position from the left respectively as seen in the above charts. The Hindus today call the main image at the centre with the name of Hayagrīva Mādhava or Viṣṇu. The temple priests say that no change was made in the arrangement of the idols in the temple so far as their knowledge goes and that this has been the arrangement since the past. Hence, it appears that at the time of Waddell's visit either the arrangement was as he described it and it was changed at a later period.

Giving the description of the Hayagrīva Mādhava image, Dalton says—

“It is, in fact, simply a colossal image of Buddha in stone. Its modern votaries have to conceal mutilation, given it a pair of silver goggle-eyes and hooked gilt - silvered nose and the form is concealed from view by cloths and chaplets of flowers.” Once the cloth and flowers are removed there remains no doubt that the image represents the ruler of all, the compassionate Buddha.<sup>100</sup>

Waddell thinks that the Brāhmaṇas found this image of Buddha here and brought the other four idols from elsewhere and changed it into a Hindu temple.<sup>101</sup> He further says that—

“The Hindu priests, as a rule, are not very methodical in their bestowal of names upon the images which they have appropriated from Buddhist ruins.”<sup>102</sup>

But some hold the view that “at least from the sixteenth century, the temple has been considered to be one dedicated to Hayagrīva Mādhava.”<sup>103</sup> Maheswara Neog vehemently defied the notion that Hayagrīva Mādhava temple was a Buddhist shrine at any time.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Waddall, L.A: *Lamaism*, p.311.

<sup>101</sup> Waddall, L.A: *ibid.*, p.311.

<sup>102</sup> Waddall, L.A: *ibid.*, p.312.

<sup>103</sup> *Journal of Assam Research Society*, Vol. II, pp.92-93.

<sup>104</sup> Neog, M: *Religions of the North-east*, p.33.

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9. Mode of worship at present:

At present Hayagrīva Mādhava is worshipped in the form of Viṣṇu. In the early morning the *Brāhmaṇa* priest make Mādhava bathed in pure water and offers *Tulasīmālā* and *Dhukdhukimālā* to him. The day starts with performance of *homa* to Viṣṇu. Then the priest worships him with *nyāsa*, *mantra* and offerings of *pādyā* and *arghya* etc. During the worship a section of people play musical instrument such as the conch, bell, and drum. The devotees perform prayers and chant *hariguṇa* (glory of god) to the accompanied by the musical instruments. Recitations from the Holy Scriptures are the main items of the service. Singing songs of *rāga* called *biyahāra-gīta* which re-tell stories from the *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Bhāgavata* and other *purāṇas* by a chorus, called *ojā-pali*, *Samkīrtana*, terminates the morning ceremonials. Daily offerings are given to Mādhava with cooked rice, moong pulse, putakal (a kind of banana), ghee, molasses, and *Ṣoḍaśopacāra*, known as *nitya bhoga*. *Brāhmaṇas* cook rice and curry and offer at noon a little quantity with other items of food like curd, milk, rice cooked in milk to Mādhava. After that the cooked food is distributed among priests and assembled devotees. The ceremonials performed thereafter are *nāma prasaṅga*, reading from the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* and so on. In the evening the priests worship the deity and perform *ārati* with musical sounds and burning of incense. The performance is followed by *nāma saṅgīta* (kīrtana) by women and then by male devotees. Sri Ramchandra Barapatra gives a description of the rites and festivals performed in the Hayagrīva Mādhava temple in the neo-vaiṣṇavite style, and the tradition continues till today in this temple.

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10. Hayagrīva in Buddhism:

Lord Hayagrīva appears as a wrathful manifestation of Avalokiteśvara in Tibetan Buddhism. It is believed that there are 108 forms of Hayagrīva. The Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara is one of the most popular gods in Mahāyānic pantheon of Buddhism. In the *Mahāvairocana sūtra* Hayagrīva is mentioned in the description of the great Magic circle or *Maṇḍala* as a Vidyārāja, who is placed close to the figure of Avalokiteśvara. Moreover, the celebrated Buddhist missionary Bodhiruci says Vidyārāja Hayagrīva was connected with Amoghapāśa, as a special aspect of Avalokiteśvara.<sup>105</sup>

Likewise as Brāhmaṇical god, also in Buddhism, Hayagrīva is believed to be the god of knowledge. Van Gulik describes in his work as to why Viṣṇu Hayagrīva was considered as Vidyārāja in *Mahāyāna* Buddhism. The word Vidyādhara, contained with the root *dhṛ* means ‘to hold or to carry’, as they carry magical knowledge or *vidyā*.<sup>106</sup> The Vidyādhara greatly rises in position when *mantrayānic* doctrines began to flourish and the Vidyārāja, king of Vidyādhara, occupies an important place in *Mahāyāna* Buddhism. Gulik states that Viṣṇu Hayagrīva was taken over in the Mahāyānic pantheon as a Vidyārāja as evident in the *Mahāvairocana sūtra*. In Hinduism Viṣṇu Hayagrīva is celebrated as the reciter and promulgator of the sacred Vedas, a quality suitable enough for transformation to Vidyārāja.<sup>107</sup>

Moreover, Hayagrīva continually occupies importance aided by the fact that he is Horse headed. In Tibet and Mongolia he is known as rta-mgrin, the

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<sup>105</sup> Van Gulik, R.H: Hayagrīva; *The Mantrayānic aspect of Horse Cult in China and Japan*, p. 39.

<sup>106</sup> Van Gulik, R.H: *ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>107</sup> Van Gulik, R.H: *ibid.*, p.28.

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‘Horse necked one’. He is one of the *Dharmapālas*, defender of the faith and an awful demon destroyer and particularly worshipped by the horse traders.<sup>108</sup>

In Buddhist *sādhana*, Hayagrīva is an emanation of Amitābha, associated with Saptāśatika, is restored from the *Saptāśatikakalpa* which gives an extensive description of the appearance of the god. Therefore, He is designated as the Saptāśatika Hayagrīva. The *dhyāna* contained in the *sādhana* describes the appearance of the god.<sup>109</sup>

In another place of *Sāadhanamālā*, another form of the god is depicted that originates from Akṣobhya, the Dhyāni Buddha. The worshiper should imagine the deity as Ārya-Hayagrīva, appearing wrathful with red complexion, eight arms and three faces. Each face is with three eyes and bears the image of Akṣobhya on his crown. His right face is blue and left is white and he is adorned with snakes as ornaments. His legs are folded in *Lalita* position and he is dressed in tiger skin. His four right hands hold the raised arrow and *vajra*, *staff*, *karaṇa* pose. Two of his left hands, hold the louts and the bow, another left hand has a raised index finger, and forth hand is placed on the breast.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Van Gulik, R.H: *ibid.*, p.28.

<sup>109</sup> “Raktavarṇaṃ mahābhayānakaṃ trinetraṃ kapilaśmaśruraudraṃ bṛhadurdaraṃ  
damṣṭākārāhnaṃ dantauṣṭhakapālamāhnaṃ jaṭāmukuṭinaṃ Amitābhaśirasakaṃ.  
Dvītīyamukhaṃ bhīmabhayānakaṃ nīlaṃhayānanaṃ hīhīkāranādināṃ  
Brahmāṇḍaśikharākarāntaṃ dvītīyena bhavāgrayantaṃ aṣṭanāgopetaṃ  
kharavavāmanākāraṃ vyāghrcarmanlvasanaṃ sarvālaṅkārabhūṣitaṃ sakaladevāsuraṃ  
tarjayantaṃ grhītavajradaṇḍaṃ.... vicintayet.” *Sāadhanamālā*, II. p.509.

<sup>110</sup> “Ārya- Hayagrīvaṃ raktavarṇaṃ trimhukhaṃ aṣṭabhujaṃ pratimukhaṃ trinetraṃ  
nīlasitadakṣiṇetravadanaṃ sarpābharaṇaṃ lalitākṣepapadanyāsaṃ

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Hayagrīva Lokeśvara is one of the 108 forms of Avalokiteśvara. He is seated in the Vajraparyāṅka, on a lotus with four hands. Two of the principal arms are placed in the *Vyākhyāna* pose, the third holds a rosary and the forth left hand holds a lotus.<sup>111</sup> Hayagrīva is mentioned as one of the companions along with Tārā, Sudhanakumāra, Bhṛkuṭī of Khasarpaṇa, the popular god described in the *Sāadhanamālā*.<sup>112</sup> The Lokanātha form of Avalokiteśvara is also described as accompanied by Tārā and Hayagrīva.<sup>113</sup>

It can be concluded that today's Hayagrīva temple in *Maṇikūṭa* was made with ruins of an old Buddhist structure and subsequently the Buddhist shrine might have been transformed as a centre of Hindu faith. In course of time the *Vajrayāna* Buddhist tantrism might have a contact with Brāhmanic religion and culture, and thus some of their elements were modified, reformed or sometimes even extinguished.

Thus from the assimilation of Buddhist and Hindu Cult, Hayagrīva Mādhava became a Hindu-Buddhist god that developed in *Kāmarūpa*. It can be unhesitatingly expressed that the Hayagrīva Mādhava temple situated in the hillock *Maṇikūṭa* at *Hājo* is a place which is the symbol of religious unification in *Kāmarūpa*.

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sakrodhadṛṣṭinirikṣaṇaṃ, prathamamukhaṃ smeram lalajjihvam, dakṣīnamukhaṃ  
daṃṣṭrāvaṣṭabdhauṣṭhaṃ, vyāghracarmamvasanaṃ vajra-daṇḍa-karaṇamudrā-  
śarodyatadakṣīnakaracatuṣṭayaṃ tarjanikā-svakucagraha-padma-  
dhanurudyatavāmakaracatuṣṭayaṃ Akṣobhyamaulinaṃ dhyāyet.”*ibid.*, p.508.

<sup>111</sup> Bhattacharyya, B: *Op. Cit.*, p.394.

<sup>112</sup> *Sāadhanamālā*, pp.39-41.

<sup>113</sup> *ibid.*, p.49.

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# NATIONAL SEMINAR ON TEXTS, MANUSCRIPTS & ORAL TRADITIONS OF TRIPURA

Organised by  
Department of Sanskrit, Tripura University, Suryamaninagar  
in collaboration with  
Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi  
(Date : 16<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2016)

## Certificate of Participation

This is to certify that *Ms. Anindita Adhikari*.....

.....  
participated in the above Seminar.

a) He/She presented a paper titled *Hayagrīva in the Āgamas*.

b) Chaired a session titled .....

c) Volunteered in the Seminar

d) Participated in the Cultural Performance of the Seminar

e) Attended the Seminar

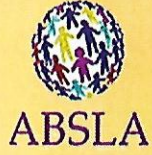
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General President of the Conference

Date : 13th December, 2016.





*Workshop*  
*On*  
*Research Methodology*  
*For Literature and Language Studies*

*Organized by :* Department of English, Tripura University  
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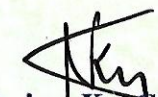
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# राष्ट्रीय-वैदिक-समारोहः २०१४

## NATIONAL VEDIC CONFERENCE, 2014



AGARTALA, TRIPURA  
27 - 29 March, 2014

Organised by

Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan (Deemed University under the Ministry of HRD, Govt. of India), Ekalavya Campus, Mohanpur, Tripura  
And

Tripura Rajya Veda Vidya Prasaran Samiti, Bholananda Sevashram, Agartala, Tripura

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*This is to certify that Prof./Dr./Sri/Smt. .... Anindita Adhikari.....*  
*has participated in the 3-day National Vedic Conference on the theme 'Veda :*  
*Repository of all knowledge' held at Agartala, Tripura from 27<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> March,*  
*2014 as a ..... delegate..... and presented a paper entitled*  
*'Hayagrīva Avatāre Utsānusandhān' (Bengali).....*

(Prof. K.B. Subbarayudu)

Chairman,

3-Day National Vedic Conference-2014

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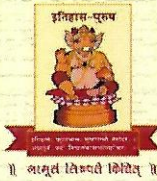
# ICHR SPONSORED NATIONAL SEMINAR

On

## Revisiting the Society and Culture of Uttar Purba Bharat

Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 2017

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This is to certify that Prof. / Dr. / Ms. / Mr. .... *Anindita Adhikari* .....  
of ..... *Tripura University* ..... has attended and presented his / her paper  
titled..... *In Quest of Religious Origin of Hayagriva* .....  
in the National Seminar on '**Revisiting the Society and Culture of Uttar Purba Bharat**' organised by  
Bharatiya Itihas Sankalan Samiti, Assam in collaboration with the Department of Sanskrit, Gauhati  
University and Pandu College, Guwahati held at Gauhati University on 22-23 February, 2017.

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## CERTIFICATE OF PARTICIPATION

This is to certify that Prof./Dr./Sri./Smt. Anindita Adhikari, Research Scholar, Department of Sanskrit, Tripura University

attended the Third Annual International Conference 2017 organised by the *Paschimbanga Anchalik Itihas O Loksanskriti Charcha Kendra in collaboration with Bidhannagar College* on 01.07.2017 & 02.07.2017 (Saturday & Sunday) at the Bidhannagar College, FB-2, Sector - I, Salt Lake, Kolkata-700 064 and presented a paper entitled Episode of Hayagrīva in the Devī-Bhāgavata.

*M. D.*

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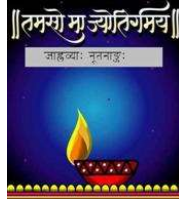


## JAHNAVI SANSKRIT E-JOURNAL

[A First International Electronic Peer-reviewed Quarterly Refreed UGC Approved Sanskrit Tri-lingual Journal]

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त्रिंशे-एकत्रिंशे च संयुक्ताङ्के भवतां सर्वेषां मङ्गलाभिनन्दनम्।



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मुख्यसम्पादकः	विद्यावाचस्पति-डा.सदानन्दशाः ।
पुनर्वीक्षकः	प्रो. पीयूषकान्त दीक्षित, डा. जयप्रकाशनारायणः, डा. अनिलप्रतापगिरिः ।
विशिष्टपुनर्वीक्षकः	Dr. PK Wendabona, Department of Basic Principles, Institute of Indigenous Medicine University of Colombo, Rajagiriya Sri Lanka
सम्पादकः	डा. राधावल्लभशर्मा, डा. नरेश शर्मा डा. श्रीनाथधरद्विवेदी, श्रीश्यामबाबु, डा. मुकेशकुमारः, डा. राजनमिश्रः, डा. विपिनकुमारशाः ।
प्रकाशकः	डा. विपिनकुमारशाः ।
प्रकाशन-सम्पादनसहायकः	डा. मीनाक्षीजोशी, श्रीरिपुदमनचन्द्र, सुश्रीगायत्रीशर्मा, डा. सुमनदीक्षित, डा. सरिताश्रीवास्तव, श्री सुमित-आनन्दः
प्रतिनिधयः (लोकार्पणसन्दर्भे)	श्री महेशदत्तः।
तकनीकिप्रबन्धनसहायकः	रित्ज वेब होस्टिंग, बंगलोर।

सारस्वत-निकेतनाख्या संस्कृतसेवासरणिः पूज्यगुरुपदैः कीर्तिशेषैः राष्ट्राधीशपुरस्कृतैः **देवानन्दशास्त्रवर्षैः** प्रातस्मरणीयैः स्वनामधन्यैः राष्ट्राधीशपुरस्कृतैः **तुलानन्दशास्त्रप्रतामनारायणशास्त्रवर्षैः** उद्धाटिता विद्यावाचस्पत्युपाधिभाक्-सदानन्दशास्त्रमुगता एषा सरणिः विपिनशास्त्रा संस्कृतानुरागिसहयोगैः विविधेषु रूपेषु संस्कृतप्रचार-प्रसाराय सन्नद्धा वर्तते तेषु रूपेषु एवायं प्रबन्धः जाह्नवी संस्कृत ई जर्नलनाम्ना विधेऽस्मिन् प्रथितः।

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## ADVENT OF HAYAGRĪVA IN THE PURĀNIC LITERATURE

Anindita Adhikari<sup>347</sup>

Key words – *Viṣṇu*, God, *Purāṇas*, *Veda*,

### Abstract

*Lord Viṣṇu* a major God of Indian pantheon originated in the Ṛg Veda, and there is a vast mythological elaboration of *Viṣṇu* in the post Vedic texts like the epic and the Purāṇic Literature. In the post Vedic age, as Lord *Viṣṇu* gradually emerged as a prominent and independent deity, and a trend of combining both human and animal forms as incarnations of *Viṣṇu* is often seen. The incarnation of the half-horse & half-man *Viṣṇu* variously known as Hayagrīva, Hayaśīras or Hayaśirṣa, finds mention in the epic and in some Purāṇas. *Purāṇas* occupy a unique position in Indian Literature, both sacred and secular, preserving ancient India's vast cultural history, including historical legends, religious ceremonies, various arts and sciences. They aim to glorify the great divinities Brahmā, *Viṣṇu* or Śiva and their several forms; but to apotheosize their own specific deity as superior to others they turn sectarian. The accounts of Hayagrīva found in the epic and Purāṇic literature are conflicting, but they provide us valuable materials regarding the origin of Hayagrīva concept and extent of the cult of this deity in ancient India.

*Purāṇas* occupy a unique position in Indian Literature, both sacred and secular, preserving ancient India's vast cultural history, including historical legends, religious ceremonies, various arts and sciences. They aim to glorify the great divinities Brahmā, *Viṣṇu* or Śiva and their several forms; but to apotheosize their own specific deity as superior to others they turn sectarian. Sukumari Bhattacharji comments "Purāṇas are sectarian scripture, each magnifying the cult and character of Śiva, Brahmā or one or other of the incarnations of *Viṣṇu*." *Viṣṇu* a major God of Indian pantheon originated in the Ṛg Veda, and there is a vast mythological elaboration of *Viṣṇu* in the post Vedic texts like the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas. In the post Vedic age, as Lord *Viṣṇu* gradually emerged as a prominent and independent deity, and a trend of combining both human

<sup>347</sup> Tripura University, Agartala.



and animal forms as incarnations of Viṣṇu is often seen. The incarnation of the half-horse & half-man Viṣṇu variously known as Hayagrīva, Hayaśīras or Hayaśīrṣa, Hayāsya finds mention in the Mahābhārata and in some Purāṇas. Hayagrīva myth found in the MBh where we learn how the Horse-headed Viṣṇu brings back the stolen Vedas and how He kills the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha symbolizes the triumph of supreme knowledge being guided by the god over the demons of passion and darkness. The accounts found in the MBh and Purāṇas are conflicting, but they provide us valuable materials regarding the origin of Hayagrīva concept and extent of the cult of this deity in ancient India.

In the post epic Puranic literature, the prominent *Purāṇas* that give an insight into Hayagrīva are the-*Viṣṇupurāṇa*, *Varāhapurāṇa*, *Agnipurāṇa*, *Devībhāgavata* etc. The tradition of incarnations of Viṣṇu conceived in ancient time, crystallized into form and conception of the ten incarnations later, but the list varies from text to text. An effort to analyses the Hayagrīva concept reflected in the different Purāṇas reveal four different aspects that have been hereby dealt with:

- Avatāric establishment of Hayagrīva in different Purāṇas
- Mythological aspect of the Hayagrīva in Purāṇas
- Iconographical descriptions of Hayagrīva in the Purāṇas

#### *Avatāric establishment of Hayagrīva in different Purāṇas:*

In the several purāṇas grouped as Vaiṣṇava Purāṇa the avatāric establishment of Hayagrīva are noted. In Viṣṇu Purāṇa Hayagrīva finds a fourth place along with Matsya, Kurma, Varāha, Aśva and Siṃha<sup>348</sup>. Aśva refers to Hayagrīva Viṣṇu with the head of Horse, who is said to have appeared at the end of a great sacrifice, performed by Brahmā and breathed the Vedas from his nostrils (as in second book of BhP). The fourth avatāra is always elsewhere to be the Vāmana or dwarf, but in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa Aśva is mentioned as fourth avatāra<sup>349</sup> of Viṣṇu. Interestingly Varāha, Aśva and Siṃha are anthropomorphic having boar's head or horse's head as well as lion's head on the human body, however, they are somehow different from the Matsya avatāra. Evaluation of text reveals that Matsya, Varāha and Aśva form of Viṣṇu symbolizes a direct or indirect association with revival of the earth. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* contains three avatāric lists of

<sup>348</sup> Matsyakūrmavarāhāśva-siṃharūpādibhiḥ sthitim/  
Cakāra jagato yo'hajaḥ yo'hadya māmālapīṣyati//V.17.11

<sup>349</sup> Descent or a incarnation of a God, appearance of any deity upon earth but more particularly the incarnations of Viṣṇu in ten principal forms, viz. the fish, tortoise, boar, man-lion, dwarf, the two Ramas, Kṛṣṇa, Buddha and Kalki.



Viṣṇu consequently found in the first,<sup>350</sup> second<sup>351</sup> and tenth<sup>352</sup> sakndha. Not the first but the second and third avatāric list includes Hayagrīva as eleventh and second incarnation of Viṣṇu. Whereas, *Vāmana Purāṇa* primarily mentioned Hayagrīva as the third incarnation of Viṣṇu, in *Agni Purāṇa* Hayagrīva is reflected as a fifth incarnation of Viṣṇu. *Garuḍa Purāṇa* mentioned Hayagrīva as tenth incarnation of Viṣṇu<sup>353</sup>. *Matsya Purāṇa* refers Hayagrīva as an antecedent of Matsyāvatāra which indicates Hayagrīva might be the first of the usual list of the incarnation of Viṣṇu. These lists are not intended to indicate a fixed list of avatāras of Viṣṇu but the Purāṇakāra intends to mention different images who are the destroyer of evil. Although Hayagrīva is not included in the lists of Avatāras in the MBh several epithets in the text refers to Viṣṇu having horses head. Moreover, the text contains the core concept of the Vaiṣṇava myth about Hayagrīva recovering the Vedas from demon Madhu-Kaiṭabha, by slaying them. Later in Purāṇic literature this myth changed somewhat slightly or completely.

#### *Mythological aspect of the Hayagrīva in Purāṇas:*

Of the five sectarian groups of Purāṇas such as Vaiṣṇava, Śākta, Śaiva, Gāṇpatya and Saura, three of the major sectarian literature mention Hayagrīva. The central Vaiṣṇava myth of Hayagrīva is based on the theme of recovery of the Vedas from the Demon(s). However, the Hayagrīva myths found in the Vaiṣṇava Purāṇa as well as the Śākta Purāṇa are with some variations, but more or less similar in Śaiva and Śākta Purāṇa. In Vaiṣṇava Purana's<sup>354</sup>, Hayagrīva is included in the list of avatāras, portrayed as incarnation of Viṣṇu who saves the Vedas for the welfare of the universe (cosmos). On the contrary we find the demon(s) slain by lord Viṣṇu on account of the stolen Vedas<sup>355</sup>. Elsewhere it is seen that Hayagrīva was slain by Viṣṇu due to personal conflict rather than stealing the Vedas<sup>356</sup>. In the Ag.P we come across a reference where the Veda devastating demon Hayagrīva was killed by Viṣṇu assumed the form of a fish and recover the Veda's<sup>357</sup>. But this mythological narrative is absent from the MaP, where Matsya himself says that when the world was burnt down in a great deluge, Viṣṇu, in the form

<sup>350</sup> BhP I.3.1-25.

<sup>351</sup> *ibid*, II.7.1-38.

<sup>352</sup> *ibid*, X.40.17-22.

<sup>353</sup> GaP 202.

<sup>354</sup> MatP- LIII.5, AgP-II.1-17, BhP-V.18.1-6, VII.9.37, VIII.24.7-57, XI.4.17

<sup>355</sup> AgP-II.1-1, BhP-VIII.24.7-57

<sup>356</sup> ViP-V.19, MaP-173.15, BhP- VI.10.19, VIII.10.21, VII.2.4-5.

<sup>357</sup> AgP II.1-17.



of a horse, recompiled the Vedas and Vedāṅgas<sup>358</sup>. Such as the matter of abduction of Vedas was absent, so was the slaying of the demon Hayagrīva absent from the MatP. However, the description (myth) of slaying of the demons Madhu-Kaiṭabha (makhu-kaiṭabhavadham) is present in this Purāṇa, but it is not related to the revelation of the Vedas. In the eighth skandha of the BhP, where lord Viṣṇu assumed the form of a fish in order to save the Vedas from the demon Hayagrīva at the end of the Brahma kalpa<sup>359</sup>. Katre; O'Flaherty, S.S.Dange noted this curious development<sup>360</sup>. It is interesting to note that in the eighth skanda of BhP, the entire myth is cited where Matsya Viṣṇu recovers the Vedas from demon Hayagrīva, but in the previous and later skandas a reference is drawn to Hayaśira Viṣṇu recovering the Vedas from the demons Madhu Kaiṭabha by killing them<sup>361</sup>. This contradictory and perplexing note of the Purāṇakara in the same Purāṇa is difficult to realize. Here not only has Matsya replaced Hayaśiras; but the demon Hayagrīva has also replaced Madhu and Kaiṭabha. Brown states that, "Bhāgavatas account is basically the same as the Matsya Purāṇa's but adds an interesting introduction and conclusion. In this context of underlying motives responsible for the double substitution of Matsya for Hayaśiras and Hayagrīva for Madhu-Kaiṭabha."<sup>362</sup> O'Flaherty states that "the generally negative symbolism of the mare, with its connotations of eroticism, without fertility, in post Vedic times when the cult of asceticism reared its ugly head." she thinks that "in order to rescue Viṣṇu from his equine role when it becomes a negative one, the Paurāṇika draws upon an already available avatāra: the fish who rescue the Vedas from the doomsday flood.....so the fish who was the enemy of the doomsday mare now becomes the fish who is the enemy of the demonic underwater horse."<sup>363</sup> The substitution of Matsya for Hayaśiras was clearly aided by the fact that both avatāras (Hayagrīva & Matsya) were connected with promulgating or protecting the Vedas. BhP mentions a new version of Matsya story, that reflect the Vedas slipping from Brahma's mouth and, Matsya recovering them, but not referring to any demon or demons<sup>364</sup>. Here also we find Hayagriva associated with Yajña may be considered to the later Vedic myth. GaP tells us that Hari having become a fish, slew the daitya Hayagrīva, recovered the

<sup>358</sup> Nirdagdheṣu ca lokaṣu vajrūpeṇa vai mayā/

Angāni caturo vedāḥ purāṇaṁ nyāyavistaraṁ// MatP. LIIL.5.

<sup>359</sup> BhP VIII.24.7-57.

<sup>360</sup> Brown, C. Mackenzie. The Triumph of the Goddess. P-244.

<sup>361</sup> BhP.5.18.1-6, 7.9.37, 11.4.17.

<sup>362</sup> Brown, C. Mackenzie. The Triumph of the Goddess. P-37.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid*, p- 37.

<sup>364</sup> BhP II.7.12.



Vedas and protected Manu<sup>365</sup>. Other Purāṇas also refer to BhP's new version<sup>366</sup>. Dikshitar admits that the BhP, AgP, PaP follow a more recent tradition than the MatP. He also argued that the MatP "shows its intimate acquaintance with the Bhāgavata Purāṇa." And he suggests that the MatP does not directly give the purpose of the fish avatāra, this purpose being given in the Bhāgavatas account, i.e. the slaying of Hayagrīva to recover the Vedas. He offers two possibilities, one that the BhP supplied the motive missing in the MatP, or the MatP was aware of the detailed version in the Bhāgavata and so did not want to repeat it. We have also seen the proximity of the Hayagrīva Viṣṇu and Matsya Viṣṇu in connection of rescuing the Vedas. It appears there is a special relationship between these two incarnations, sometimes only listed and sometimes in the form of a myth, these two incarnations have been found to be in vogue.

The Śākta Purāṇa -Devī- Bhāgavata gives another mythological narrative of Hayagrīva that combine both divine and demonic Hayagrīva in a single myth. The mythological narrative describes how Lord Viṣṇu lost his original head and get a horse head, it also depicts another Hayagrīva -demonic by nature killed by divine Hayagrīva in the same narrative. *Devī-Bhāgavata* is the first major mythological narrative of *Viṣṇu-Hayagrīva* amongst the purāṇas. The content of the story is related to the myth of horse-faced Yajña-Viṣṇu in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*<sup>367</sup>. The fifth chapter of the first Skandha named "*Hayagrīvāvatārakathanam*" of *DBh* introduces a number of important themes developed later on the passage describes two forms under the same name, i.e. *Hayagrīva* - one divine and another demonic by nature; the malevolent demon *Hayagrīva* being killed by the benevolent *Viṣṇu-Hayagrīva*, the equine form of Lord *Viṣṇu*. In the *DBh* the myth of Hayagrīva, is somehow different from the myths discussed in the Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas. The unexpected disaster of viṣṇu losing his head is explained by the motive that the world does not generate work without reason. Devī provides two basic reasons explaining the beheading of Lord Viṣṇu. The first reason is the curse given to Viṣṇu by Mahalakṣmī<sup>368</sup> and the second reason is the boon given to demon Hayagrīva by Devī that, the demon Hayagrīva could only be killed by Hayagrīva<sup>369</sup>. At the end of the legend it is seen that as ordered by Devī, Visvakarma fixes a horse's head on Viṣṇu's beheaded

<sup>365</sup> GaP 142.2-3.

<sup>366</sup> AgP- II.16-17, PaP. VI-230.1-33.

<sup>367</sup> ŚatB XIV.1.1.1-17.

<sup>368</sup> "Tāmasyāviṣṭdehā sā cukopātiśayaṃ tadā/ śanakailḥ samuvācedamidam patatu te śiraḥ" I.5.80.

<sup>369</sup> "Grhaṃ gacha mahābhāga kuru rājyaṃ yathasukhaṃ/ hayagrīvādṛte mṛtyurna te nūnaṃ bhaviṣyati// "I.5.101.



body, so that Viṣṇu Hayagrīva could kill the demon Hayagrīva. The DBh notes in closing, “Hari became Hayagrīva through the grace of Mahāmāyā.”<sup>370</sup> To be noted is that the Śākta Purāṇa acknowledges the greatness of the goddess behind Viṣṇu’s transcendental nature. Every Purāṇa is a tribute to the religious community and worth mentioning about their respective gods and goddesses. This trend also reverberates here. In this mythological narrative it is noticeable that Devī recounts how the demon Hayagrīva harasses the sages and Devas—“Sa pīḍayati duṣṭātmā munīn devāṃśca sarvaśaḥ”<sup>371</sup>; in the *Devībhāgavata*’s account there is no mention of demon *Hayagrīva*’s role as Veda-thief in the account of DBh, developed earlier in the *Bhāgavata*, also no direct evidence of Viṣṇu Hayagrīva’s role for retrieving Vedas that is the central theme of the Hayagrīva myth found in the Vaiṣṇava purāṇas.

In the Śaiva Purāṇic text named Skanda Purāṇa<sup>372</sup> a story is reflected to explain how and why the great Hari became the horse headed one<sup>373</sup>. Īśvara says that at a holy place the horse headed Viṣṇu did his penance for regaining his original form by getting rid of his horse head. Vyāsa narrates the same legend found in the DBh, where Hari – Viṣṇu lost his head by cutting of a cord, the severed head at once went to the heaven. Then the gods requested Visvakarman to attach a head to the beheaded body of Hari. Visvakarman demanded the head of Viṣṇu for this purpose and also requested a share in Yajña for the job, but the gods could not find Viṣṇu’s head. Whereas DBh mentions the place where Viṣṇu’s severed head was found this account is absent here. Here, we see that Visvakarman found handy horses of the Sun and cut off one of their heads and joined it very well to the trunk of Viṣṇu. Thus Viṣṇu became Hayagrīva. The association of Yajña with Viṣṇu is adorned with epithets like ‘Yajñapati’, and as the Yajña was over, Viṣṇu Hayagrīva went to a holy place called Dharmāraṇya. This Purāṇa gives a different reason for the curse on Viṣṇu to lose his head and become horse headed, which is altogether different from the one mentioned in the DBh, we see that once upon a time Brahma being proud started an argument as to who is the greatest among the Trimurti’s Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara. Then Viṣṇu said that everybody in the three worlds is overpowered by Viṣṇumāyā and Mahāviṣṇu to be in every respect superior to all others.

<sup>370</sup> “Viṣṇoḥ śarīre tenāśu yojitaṃ vājimastakam/  
Hayagrīvo harirjāto mahāmāyāprasādataḥ//” I.5.109

<sup>371</sup> DBh I.5.103.

<sup>372</sup> The story of Viṣṇu Hayagrīva appears in the Dharmāraṇya khaṇḍa of the Skanda Purāṇa chapter XIV-XV.

<sup>373</sup> SkaP III.14.1-7.



Brahmā did not relish this and cursed that Viṣṇu should lose his head and because of this curse Viṣṇu became as a horse-headed one<sup>374</sup>.

The legends regarding the details of origin and purpose of the horse-headed form of Viṣṇu appears in both of the Śākta and Śaiva texts namely Devī-Bhāgavata and Skanda Purāṇa, with slight variations. In the DBh Devī played an important role whereas Skanda Purāṇa mention that the Śiva plays a part in blessing the Horse-headed Viṣṇu for regaining His original head. Both of the Purāṇas mention Viṣṇu to be in deep slumber at the time his head was severed and it was. Visvakarman who fixed the horses head on Viṣṇu's beheaded trunk in the both purāṇas. The word tvastrā is used for the Visvakarman in the DBhP. Interestingly Skanda Purāṇa says that the head of one of the Sun's horses was cut off and fixed into the beheaded trunk of Viṣṇu which remind us the Vedic legend of Pravargya. In both of the Purāṇas termite demanded a share in the sacrifice, whereas in the SkP we have seen that Visvakarman also stipulate a share in the sacrifice for the job of fixing the head of Viṣṇu which also reminds us of Asvin found in the Vedic texts. The curses of Mahālakṣmī and Brahmā respectively found in the DBh and SkP are in connection with the origin of the Horse-headed form of Viṣṇu. In the DBh Viṣṇu Hayagrīva serves the purpose of killing the demon Hayagrīva, but there is no mention of demon Hayagrīva in the SkP. In SkP the purpose of Viṣṇu in a horse-headed form to participate in a sacrifice is stressed and legend of Hayagrīva almost ends except for the event of Viṣṇu's regaining his original head by the grace of Lord Siva in the Dharmāraṇya, with the compilation of Yajña being absent in the DBh.

The variations of a single purāṇic myth in many cases reflect the development and evolution of a religious sect and the variant forms of Hayagrīva result from the possible religio-historical significance of the religio-sectarian texts. The Śākta sectarian text DBh appears to combine the divine and demonic Hayagrīva figure in a same myth, whereas in the Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas such contrasting context is absent in a same myth. Several Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas contain both divine and demonic descriptions of Hayagrīva, yet non combines the two contradictory figures in a single myth as in the Śākta Purāṇa.

From the study of mythology of Hayagrīva found in the different sectarian purāṇas, it is observed that addition or omission of events as in a particular set of myths reveals the that specific features of each myth reflect the viewpoint of the Purāṇakāras

<sup>374</sup> *ibid.* III.15.32-42.



and their tradition; and the myth transforms as it is written and adapted to a specific sectarian framework.

The Purāṇic corpus not only contains Hayagrīva in several myths but certain of the texts also provide iconographical description of this deity. A description of Hayagrīva's impersonation is found in MBh that could be later developed as iconographical form.

*Iconographical descriptions of Hayagrīva in the Purāṇas:*

Iconography has several integral elements that include the classification of images, textual principle of image making, mode of casting materials employed in image making, the accessories and the characters of god and goddesses. Iconography is one of the fascinating branches of Indology that finds origin in the womb of remote post. It is a śāstra called Śilpāśāstra, science of sculpture, as far as the Hindu or Buddhist and Jain view of iconography is concerned. The iconographical details are largely contained in the Matsya, Agni, Skanda, Garuḍa, Linga, Bhaviṣya and Viṣṇu particularly the Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇas, these Purāṇas have contributed a great deal to both temple architecture and iconology. The lore embodied in the purāṇas and other canonical works constitute the primary source of information. The purāṇas are broadly divided into Mahapurāṇas and Upapurāṇas and also into five sectarian groups on the basis of different religious sect or Gods. Some of the purāṇas in totality constitute an invaluable source for iconographical studies and present detailed description of the activities of the God. Again, some of the purāṇas specifically deal with Pratimālakṣaṇa iconography.

In course of the long art history of India, Hayagrīva as a form of Viṣṇu appears in plastic representations not in abundance. The epic and purāṇic literature represented Viṣṇu as an anthropomorphic form along with conventional iconographic character and blazon. Vaiṣṇavisam seems to have been the most popular hindu sect where Viṣṇu is the supreme being alone is the manifestation of the universe. We particularly refer to the iconographical description of lord Hayagrīva in different purāṇic texts such as Agni, Garuḍa, Viṣṇudharmottara and Brahmāṇḍa (IV.5.9, VV. 35-40), though Āgama, Tantra, Śilpāśāstra and there are other works too.

Agni Purāṇa portrayed Hayagrīva featuring four hands holding discus, mace, conch, and a manuscript. His left leg placed on the śeṣanāga (divine serpent) whereas the right is on the kurma (tortoise)<sup>375</sup>. AgP surprisingly contains fifty chapters on

<sup>375</sup> "Śaṃkha cakṛ gadā vedapāṇiścāśvaśirā hariḥ/  
Vāmapādo dhṛtaḥ śeṣe dakṣiṇaḥ kūrmapṛṣṭhgaḥ"/"49.26-27



iconography which have been described by Rocher as “a summary of Pañcarātra Āgamas”<sup>376</sup>. Interestingly it has been noted that the iconographical representation of Hayagrīva in the AgP are similar in reference to the pañcarātra texts such as the Padma Saṃhitā . MatP support the description which is reflected in AgP<sup>377</sup>. Even though the Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa depicts Hayagrīva slightly differ from the description found in the AgP and MatP, particularly regarding the arrangement of the objects like conch, discus, rosary and book in the four hands. GaP describes Viṣṇupañjara stotra where Hayagrīva as white hued like a conch shell, jasmine flower or the moon, effulgent like silver, four armed holding conch shell, discus, club and a lotus, decorated with a garland of forest flowers, with magnificent mouth and cheeks and clad in yellow garments<sup>378</sup>. VidP portrayed Hayagrīva with the face of a horse and eight arms. In four of the hands he carries the conch, discus, mace and lotus and the remaining four hands placed upon the heads of the personified forms of the four Vedas. His feet rest on the outstretched palms of the goddess earth. This description is somehow different from the description given in other purāṇas.

Ichnographically Hayagrīva is represented as a theri-anthropomorphic form, an incarnation of Viṣṇu, which has the head of a horse and the body of a man, holding all four attributes of his in four of four hands; when supposed to have eight arms, four are holding the attributes and the other four are holding the Vedas or touching the heads of the personified Vedas; He is supposed to be shown in a brilliant white hue and his clothes should be blue (Rao 261). Below most icons of Hayagrīva, one may see the demon Hayagrīva, that was slain by the incarnation of Viṣṇu (Rao 261). Historically, a few iconographical representations are made to Hayagrīva, and the ones still existent, are believed to have originated from Rajasthan (Desai 143). Although the iconographical representations are limited, a surge of textual evidence of Hayagrīva could be obtained from the Mahabharata and the purāṇic texts, spread across India. Hayagrīva, as the supreme lord of knowledge, wisdom and wealth has some importance within Indian culture. There is a custom in certain regions of South India, where students or anyone pursuing any sort of education prays to Hayagrīva before the start of their educational journey. Since He is the God of knowledge, certain ślokas and mantras are to be chanted in his praise, for the gift of supreme knowledge. Another important factor that represents the prevalence of Hayagrīva is the celebration of Hayagrīva Jayantī, in various temples to celebrate the attainment of knowledge and the protection of the Vedas.

<sup>376</sup> Nayar, Kamal. E. Hayagrīva: The Many History of Indian Deity. p – 125.

<sup>377</sup> Babu, Sridhar . Hayagrīva: The Horse-Headed Deity in Indian Culture. p-61.

<sup>378</sup> GaP I.13.1-10.



### Conclusion:

After a thorough study of the Purāṇic Literature it can be conclusively said that Hayagrīva the horse headed form of Viṣṇu, a minor incarnation yet associated with some aspect of culture, is by no means minor as goes prevalence and popularity. An exploration of the avatāric establishments, myths, iconography of *Hayagrīva Viṣṇu* reveals the cult of *Viṣṇu* to be expansive, and the innumerable methods and ways of imagination can create ideas about the lord, to suit basic requirements and complement the socio -religious system of the time. To conclude, it is clear that *Hayagrīva* is all pervading and evident, and different sections of society can be brought together and be unified through religion under the pretext of *Viṣṇu*.

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कलकाता-७०० ००६

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## Lord Hayagrīva as Reflected in the Geographical Description of the Purāṇas

Anindita Adhikari

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### Abstract

*Hayagrīva* is the incarnation of Viṣṇu with a horse head. 'Haya' meaning horse and 'grīva' means neck. So the deity with a horse headed form is known as *Hayagrīva*. He is sometimes identified with *Hayaśīras* and with *Hayaśīrṣa*, two other horse-headed forms of Viu. However, *Hayagrīva* is not counted among the ten well known avatāras of Viṣṇu. The fact of his getting the horse head is present in different scriptures with slight variations. He is said to have assumed the horse headed form to destroy the Asuras. In the Mahabharata Viṣṇu killed the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha, who stole the Vedas from Brahmā. Another version of the *Hayagrīva*-story is found in *Kālikā Purāṇa* which is comparatively of later origin. The *Bhadrāsava* region, where the worship of Viṣṇu takes place in the form of the horse-headed one, has been mentioned by different purāṇa texts. In this paper present author shall discuss about the cult of *Hayagrīva* which has expounded in different places mentioned in the geographical areas of the Purāṇas.

**Introduction:** The *purāṇas* have contributed to a great extent to the history and archaeology, of ancient India is geographical information contained in the *Bhūvan-koṣa* sections and the great-



ness of sacred regions and other stories dealing with pilgrimages or other religious and social episodes of ancient India. The geographical materials of the *purāṇas* are mostly contained in the first two characteristic features of the *Purāṇa*, namely *Sarga* and *Pratisarga* which deal with cosmology, cosmogony, and cosmography. They include, among other related matters, the origin of the Universe together with the earth, the oceans and the continents, mountain systems of the world, regions and their people and astronomical geography. Identical references to the geography of different lands, particularly those of *Bhārata*, occurring throughout the *purāṇas* are the historical accounts contained in them.

The *Bhadrāśva* region, where the worship of *Viṣṇu* took place in the form of the horse-headed one, has been mentioned by different *purāṇic* texts. It is one of the islands belonging to the, *caturdvīpavasumati*. The idea of '*caturdvīpavasumati*' is that the earth contains four islands which is shaped like a lotus having the mount meru as its pericarp (*karnika*), and the four islands are as its four petals. These are—

1. The *Jambu* or *Bhārata* in the south
2. *Ketumāla* in the west.
3. *Bhadrāśva* in the east and
4. The *Kuru* or *Uttarakuru* in the north,

We have another conception of the earth with seven islands, '*saptadvīpavasumati*', where the *jambudvīpa* is divided into seven such island continents which include both *Bhadrāśva* and *Ketumāla*. According to the *Vāyu Purāṇa*<sup>2</sup> (ch 33-34), the *Matsya Purāṇa*<sup>3</sup> (ch 130), and the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*<sup>4</sup> (ch 54), *Priyavrata*, the king of *Jambu-dvīpa*, divided the kingdom among his sons. This account also speaks of *Bhadrāśva* and *Ketumāla* regions. With this informative background the *Bhadrāśva* region of ancient India is associated with the deity *Hayagrīva*.

The *Viṣṇu*, *Mārkaṇḍeya* and *Vāyu Purāṇas* associates *Bhadrāśva-varṇa* with horse-headed *Viṣṇu*. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*<sup>5</sup> (II. 49-50) mentions that in the region called *bhadrāśva*, *Viṣṇu* is worshipped as a horse headed one, in the *Ketumāla* in the form of a boar, in *Bhārata*, in the form of a tortoise and in the *Kuru* in the



form of a fish, while he is found in the cosmic form (*Viśvarūpa*) everywhere —

भद्राक्षे भगवान् विष्णुरास्ते हयशिरा दिज ।  
वराहः केतुमाले तु भारते कुर्मरूपधृक् ॥  
मत्स्यरूपश्च गोविन्दः कुरुष्वास्ते जनार्दनः ।  
विश्वरूपेण सर्वत्रः सर्वेश्वरो हरिः ॥<sup>6</sup>

In another context of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, *Hayagrīva* is described as an *asura* and he was one of the assistant of *Narakāśura*. *Viṣṇu* is said to have entered at *Prāgjyotiṣapura* after killing *Hayagrīva* and other *asuras*—

हत्वा मुरुं हयग्रीवं तथा पञ्चजनं द्विज ।  
प्राग्योतिषपुरं धीमांस्तरावान् समुपागतः ॥<sup>7</sup>

After slaying *Muru*, *Hayagrīva* and *Pañcajana*, *Viṣṇu* himself took the same horse-headed form according to the desire of the dying demons. According to the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, one of the sons of *Agnīdhra*, the king of *Jambudvīpa*, was *Bhadrāśva*<sup>8</sup>. He received the lordship of the eastern part of *Meru* — मेरोः पूर्व्वेण यद् वर्षं भद्राश्वाय प्रदत्तवान्<sup>9</sup>, which came to be known as *Bhadrāśvavarṣa*. *Viṣṇu* resided there in the form of Horse-headed deity.

The *Vāyu purāṇa* is very specific about the location of *Bhadrāśvavarṣa*. This *purāṇa* associates it with horse, *bhadrāśva* being the name of *Viṣṇu*'s horse. *Mandāra*, *Karatoya*, *Lauhitya*, and *Prāgjyotiṣa* are said to have been included within *Bhadrāśvavarṣa*<sup>10</sup>. All these three, except *Mandāra* can be located in *Kāmarūpa*. *Karatoya* was the traditional boundary between Bengal and Assam. *Mandāra* may be the mountain of *Bhagalpura* region. Thus *Bhadrāśvavarṣa* was the land which comprised of eastern Bihar, Bengal and Assam.

This sort of geographical location, where the worship of various forms of *Viṣṇu* was in vogue, is also supported by a passage found in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*. The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* says that, In *Bhadrāśva* *Viṣṇu* is figured with a horse's head, in *Bhārata* as a tortoise, in *Ketumāla* as a boar, and he was in the form of fish



in the north —

भद्राश्वेश्वशिरा विष्णुभरिते कर्मसंस्थितिः ।

वराहः केतुमाले च मत्स्यरूपस्तथोत्तरे ।।<sup>11</sup>

The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* further states: “In *Badrāśva*, the Lord Janārdana has a horse head and with four arms, resembling a horse, he has three eyes.<sup>12</sup>” Except for the peculiarity of the three eyes, the description of the horse headed one, specially connected with the *Bhadrāśva* region, holds good also in the context. The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* locates *Bhadrāśvavarṣa* in the east and places it to the east of the eastern mountain *Devakūṭa*.

The *Vāmana Purāṇa*<sup>13</sup> says that God Vāmana remains in the form of *Hayaśira* on the river Kṛṣṇā and as *Hayagrīva* in Mahodaya<sup>14</sup>. This Purāṇa attributes the name of Bhadrāśva to the horse of Viṣṇu. It does not refer to *Bhadrāśva* as a place. The *Vāmanapurāṇa* (57.25-27) refers to a sacred place named *Aśvatīrtha* near the city of Mahodaya. Here the Demon king Prahlāda worshipped the Horse-faced god (*turangānana*). We find another place called ‘*Aśvatīrtha*’ on the *Aśvakraṇṭa* Mountain in *Kāmākhya* near Assam. *Mahābhārata* mentioned a holy place called *Aśvatīrthasthāna* may be connected with the horse-headed one. According to *Kūrma Purāṇa*, there is a sacred place named ‘*aśvatīrtha*’ where Lord *Nārāyaṇa* resides in the form of *Hayaśiras*. The identification of this place is uncertain.

Let us now see where this *Bhadrāśvavarṣa* or the sub-continent *Bhāratavarṣa* has been placed in the epic and purāṇas while speaking of the *Bhūvanakoṣa* or the world cosmogony. The world is said to be consisting of seven dvīpas or islands, of which *Jambudvīpa* is at the centre of the world. The mount Meru is at the centre of this *Jambudvīpa*, around which lies the sub-continent of *Ilāvṛta*. To the east of this, *Viṣkumbha* Mountain *Mandāra* Mountain and the sub-continent *Bhadrāśva* are situated. *Jaṭhara* and *Devakūṭa* are the two mountains forming the eastern boundary. One of the principal rivers of this eastern sub-continent of *Bhadrāśva* is *Sītā*<sup>15</sup>. The *Sītā* of the *Bhadrāśvavarṣa* is said to be a stream of the Ganges. Two of the principal mountains to the east of *Mandāra* are *Mani* and *Nīla*<sup>16</sup>. This mountain in the east is identified with the



*Mandāra* hill of present Bhagalpura district in Bihar. The account of *Bhāratavarṣa*, as given in chapter 58 of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* among others, the mount *Mandāra* and the river *Karatoya* and the century *Prāgjyotiṣa* have been included *Bhadrāśvavarṣa*. But in the next chapter on *Kūrmaniveśana*, the places like the *Prāgjyotiṣa* and *Lauhitya* have been included in it. The *Vāyu Purāṇa* (ch 45) also includes these and the river *Lohita* in it. The *Vāyu Purāṇa* attributes the name of *Bhadrāśva* to the white horse of Viṣṇu. Apparently this is a reference to his *Hayagrīva* form there. In Buddhist accounts *Bhadrāśva* is replaced by the name *Pūrva Videha* (Watters. Yuan Chwang, Vol- I, pp.31-36).

*Skanda Purāṇa*<sup>17</sup> tells how Kṛṣṇā's head was severed from his body by the chord of his own bow, how it has to be replaced by Viśvakarman with the head of one of the sun's chariot-horses and how the lord performed austerities in *Dharmāranya*<sup>18</sup>. We learn from the *Skanda Purāṇa*, that Kurma a form of Viṣṇu, is the presiding deity of *bhārata*, as other gods presided over other regions, e.g, *Asvaśiras* in *Bhadrāśva*, *Varāha* in *Ketumāla* and *Matsya* in the north probably *Uttarakuru*<sup>19</sup>. In This context some scholars says, "Hayagrīva was worshipped by *Vaḍavā* Brahmins in the *Dharmāranya* along with other deities. *Dharmāranya* is located near the river *Sabarmati* or ancient *Svabhramati* in the *Gujrat* state. The *Dharmāranya* where the horse headed Viṣṇu performed austerities, is also identified as a place in *Sitāpura* district in *Uttarapradesh*. This was the place where Viṣṇu was relieved of his *Horse-head*, and where he regained his original head<sup>20</sup>". According to this *Purāṇa*, the same place became a great tirtha because of this event. Although some scholars hold that the story seems to be a later concoction by the *Modha* Brahmins to add to the importance of the place of the *Dharmāranyakṣetra*<sup>21</sup>. It offers us the information regarding the extent of *Hayagrīva* cult in a particular region, according to the *Purāṇic* geography.

Now, we turn to the eastern region of India where the *Maṇikuṭa*<sup>22</sup> hill is always associated with the deity *Hayagrīva*, according to *Kālikā Purāṇa*<sup>23</sup>, which is a sanskrit work composed in *Assam*



मणिकूटः स्थितः पूर्व हयग्रीवो हरिर्षतः ।

स हयग्रीवरूपेण विष्णुर्हत्या ज्वरासुरम् ॥ (81-75).

The Kālīapurāṇa gives an account of the region Kāmarūpa, modern region of Assam, which extends as far west as the river Karatoya<sup>24</sup> in the Bogra district in Bengal. Among others, it contains the names of *Maṇikūṭa* and *Nīlaparvata* and the river *sitā* and *lauhitya*. The river *sitā* of the Bhadrāsavarsa is said to be a stream of the Ganges. We may see that how Viṣṇu after killing *Hayagrīva* & *Jvarāśura*, retired to the Mount Maṇikūṭa — हयग्रीवं यत्र हत्वा मणिकूटं पुरागतम्<sup>25</sup>. On the mount Nīla the well-known Kāmākhyāpīṭha is situated. The mount is now in the vicinity of presently renamed Guwahati. The river Lauhitya passes through the mountain Maṇikūṭa and Gandhamādana a mountain of Bhāratavarṣa—

मणिकूटस्याथ गिरेर्गन्धमादनकस्य च ।

मध्ये सवति लोहित्यो नाम सागरः ॥<sup>26</sup>

Some explanation seems necessary as to how Kamarupa came to be included within Bhadrāsavarsa, while *Prāgjyotiṣa* has been mentioned as forming a part of *Bhāratavarṣa*. The *Prāgjyotiṣa* Empire, probably assumed the name Kāmarupa at the later period, lay in both the Varṣas, round about the eastern sea, which formed the eastern boundary of *Bhāratavarṣa*. Bagadatta has been called '*Purvasāgaravṣsi*'. The province on the western coast of this eastern sea was in *Bhāratavarṣa*, while those on the east coast lay in *Bhadāsavarsa*. The Bay of Bengal is generally considered to be the eastern sea. According to the *Matsya Purāṇa* the Ganges is said to have entered the 'Dakṣiṇodhi', so the Bay of Bengal to which the Ganges flows cannot be the eastern sea. The sea must be to the north of the Bay of Bengal. It must be the sea to which the river Lauhitya flowed. This eastern sea might be the lohita sāgara mentioned in the Rāmāyaṇa. There is evidence that eastern Maymensing was once under a sea. Bakhtiyar also found a sea there. The purāṇic that river *Lauhitya* is nothing but another name



for the river Brahmaputra and is associated with the region of *Prāgjyotiṣa*<sup>27</sup> *Kāmarūpa*. From this, it appears that Brahmaputra is a modern name, perhaps used from the time of the composition of the *Kālikāpurāṇa*.

According to the earliest geographical conception of the Purāṇas, these accounts show that *Prāgjyotiṣa* formed a part of *Bhadrāśvavarṣa*, which signified the Jaxarates region, as the river *Sitā* watered it. It is clear that when the *Bhūvanakoṣavarṇanam* of the Purāṇas recorded the *Hayagrīva* form of *Lord Viṣṇu* in the *Bhadrāśvavarṣa*, *Hayagrīva* worship in that sub-continent was well established. And in this manner the *Kālikā Purāṇa* which is consider as a regional purāṇa, not only describes as how the *Hayagrīva Mādhava* was situated in *Manikūṭa* hill of the region *Prāgjyotiṣa Kāmarūpa*, but also gives a prominent position of *Hayagrīva* is became a *Hindu-Buddhist* God and continued to be worshipped as such till today.

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<sup>1</sup> *Vāyu Purāṇa* references to '*Saptadvīpvasumati*' — पृथिवी सर्वा सप्तद्वीपसमन्विता ।

<sup>2</sup> *Vāyu Purāṇa* is mentioned in the manuscripts of the *Mahābhārata* and other Hindu texts, which has led scholars to propose that the text is among the oldest in the Purāṇic genre. The *Vāyu Purāṇa* is mentioned in chapter 3.191 of the *Mahābhārata*, and section 1.7 of the *Harivamsa*, suggesting that the text existed in the first half of the 1st-millennium CE. The 7th-century Sanskrit prose writer *Bāṇabhaṭṭa* refers to this work in his *Kādambari* and *Harṣacharita*. In chapter 3 of the *Harṣacharita* *Bāṇabhaṭṭa* remarks that the *Vāyu Purāṇa* was read out to him in his native village. *Alberuni* (973 -1048), the *Persian scholar* who visited and lived in north-west Indian subcontinent for many years in early 11th century, quoted from the version of *Vāyu Purāṇa* that existed during his visit.

<sup>3</sup> The composition of the text may have begun in the last centuries of the 1st-millennium BCE, and its first version complete by about the 3rd-century of the common era, asserts *Ramachandra Dikshitar* – known for proposing ancient dates for Indian literature. Other scholars, such as *P.V.Kane*, place the earliest version of the text to between c. 200–500 CE. *Wendy Doniger* dates the *Matsya Purāṇa* to have been composed between 250 to 500 CE.



<sup>4</sup> The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* is probably one of the oldest in Purāṇa genre of Hindu literature, among the most interesting and important, states Ludo Rocher. Wendy Doniger states that, It is probably from c. 250 CE, with the exception of the *Devī Māhātmya*, which she dates to c. 550 CE. Other scholars have also suggested that parts of this Purāṇa existed by the third century. In contrast, Nileshvari Desai suggests that the oldest of extant manuscripts probably is from the 7th-century CE.

<sup>5</sup> M. Winternitz (1932): possibly early 1st millennium, but states Rocher, he added, "it is no more possible to assign a definite date to the *Vishnu Purāṇa* than it is for any other Purāṇa".

<sup>6</sup> Vi.Pu. II.II.49-50.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. V.XXIX.19.

<sup>8</sup> जम्बुद्वीपेश्वरो यस्तु अग्नीध्रो मुनिसत्तम /

तस्य पुत्रा वभूवुस्ते प्रजापतिसमा नव//

नाभिः किम्पुरुषश्चैव हरिवर्ष इलावृतः/

रम्यो हिरण्वान् षष्ठश्च कुरुर्भद्राश्च एव च // वि.पु. २/१/१६-१७

<sup>9</sup> Vi. Pu. II.I.22.

<sup>10</sup> Vā. Pu, 54.96, 100,123.

<sup>11</sup> Mā.Pu. LIV.31.

<sup>12</sup> Sridhara Babu, (1990), *Hayagrīva the horse headed deity in Indian culture*. p -33.

<sup>13</sup> The earliest core of the text has been dated variously between 450 CE - 900 CE, but most scholars favor the 9th to 11th century.

<sup>14</sup> Vām.Pu. ch-36.VV.23-25.

<sup>15</sup> Vā.Pu- ch 2 &3, Mār.Pu-ch 55 & 57.

<sup>16</sup> Mār.Pu- ch. 56, Vā-Pu- ch. 36.

<sup>17</sup> This is the old manuscript in Gupta script, which was discovered in Nepal by Haraprasad Śāstrī, and has been assigned to the 7th century A.D.

<sup>18</sup> Sk. Pu, Dharmaranya Khanda, 14-15.

<sup>19</sup> Sridhara Babu, (1990), *Hayagrīva the horse headed deity in Indian culture*. p -33.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p- 35.

<sup>21</sup> J.C Ghosh, *Hayagrīva worship in Assam*, JARS. p-81.

<sup>22</sup> The Mañikūṭa is considered holy place by the Buddhists of Tibet and even now Buddhists of the neighbouring Bhutan hills come own in cold season and do worship the god whom they regard as Mahāmuni Buddha. Waddell mentions in his work *Lāmāism* that there is a tradition in Tibet that Buddha had his parinirvāṇa in Kāmarūpa. But the Kālikā Purāṇa and Yoginī Tantra make several references to Mañikūṭa.

<sup>23</sup> The text is dated to late 9th to early 10th centuries. According to Hazra, there existed a text that was older than the extant one, and that the origin of that text was Bengal. This is denied by Shastri, who claims that the evi-

dence provided by Hazra for an earlier text can be explained by other means, without invoking an older text. According to Shastri, the local descriptions; the exposition of the myth of Naraka from who all the dynasties of Kāmarūpa drew their lineage; the description of the myth of Brahmaputra river; and the claim in the text that Kāmarūpa was holier than even Varanasi points to the text having been composed in Kāmarūpa.

<sup>24</sup> A sacred river which flows through the districts of Rungpur and Dinajpur. It formed the boundary between the kingdoms of Bengal and Kāmarūpa at the time of Mahābhārata.

<sup>25</sup> Kā.Pū. 80.24-25.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 78.73.

<sup>27</sup> Assam, with a great and ancient heritage known in ancient times as Prāgyjyotiṣa and later as Kāmarūpa, has contributed richly both to the evolution and enrichment of the civilization of India. By this name the country was known in the great epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, As well as in source of the principal Purāṇas. "Prāg means former or eastern and Jyotiṣa a star astrology, shining Prāgyjyotiṣa may be taken to mean the city of Eastern Astrology. The name is interesting in connection with the reputation which the country has always held as a land of magic and incarnation and with the view that it was in Assam that the Tantric form of Hinduism originated."

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# Hayagrīva<sup>1</sup> Episode in the Devī-Bhāgavata

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*Lord Viṣṇu* emerged as a prominent and independent deity in the Purāṇic age, and it is observed that the combination of some characteristics as an animal and a human being resulting the development in many incarnations of *Lord Viṣṇu*, as a lion-headed deity with the name of '*nṛsiṃhāvatāra*' or as a horse-headed deity with the name of '*Hayagrīvāvatāra*'. *Hayagrīva* is one of the part human, part animal incarnations of *Lord Viṣṇu*. The mythological narratives of *Hayagrīva Viṣṇu* are found in the *Mahābhārata* and in many *Purāṇas*. In *Devībhāgavata*, the story of *Viṣṇu-Hayagrīva* is the first major mythological narrative about the god in the *Purāṇa*. *Devī-Bhāgavata* contains a story about *Hayagrīva* includes the explanation of how *Viṣṇu* obtained a horse head based on the later Vedic myths (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 14.1.1.1-17). Peculiarly, this passage also combines the divine and demonic depictions of two *Hayagrīva*'s. One is the malevolent demon *Hayagrīva* who is killed by the benevolent *Viṣṇu-Hayagrīva*, the equine form of *Lord Viṣṇu*. In this paper the present author deals with the mythological narrative of the *Hayagrīva* found in the *Devī-Bhāgavata*.

*Hayagrīva* legends are found in the *Mahābhārata* and *Purāṇas*. They provide us valuable material regarding the *Hayagrīva* concept and the extent of the cult of this deity in ancient India. The story of *Viṣṇu-Hayagrīva* inserted into the fifth chapter of the first Skandha named "*Hayagrīvāvatārakathanam*" of *Devībhāgavata*. Here we have seen some important themes introduced by the story which are further developed throughout the *Purāṇa*. Firstly we have examined the details of the story.

After a long time fight for thousands of years with the demons, *Mahāviṣṇu* desired to rest for some time of restoring himself. Due to his weariness and the influence of fate, his nature being addicted to excessive slumbering '*atinidritāḥ*', and *Viṣṇu* fell into a deep sleep.



At that time gods made themselves prepared to perform a sacrifice, because *Mahāviṣṇu* was- '*makhānāmadhipaṃ prabhum*'<sup>2</sup>. So Brahmā and others went to *Vaikuṇṭha*, to meet and invite him. But they could not find him there. Then they discovered Viṣṇu completely under the control of *Yoganidrā*, unconscious, and paralysed in sleep<sup>3</sup>.

The gods were worried: then Brahmā had a plan that to awake him. It was to create termites (*vamrī*) to eat off the end of the drawn bow, which would cause the bow to spring open. According to this plan, Brahma created termite. The termite argued that the benefit of awakening Lord Viṣṇu from deep sleep would go only to the gods, while the sin of awakening a sleeping person would fall upon them. The *vamrī* initially refused to do so and listed waking up someone from deep sleep in the sins equal to *Brahmahatyā*—"*Nidrābhaṃgaḥ kathācchedo dāmpatyoh prītibhedanam / Śīsumātrvibhedaśca brahmahatyāsamam smṛtam*"<sup>4</sup>. Thus through the medium of *vamrī* we are taught some ethics while listening to a story. The *vamrī* was incurring the sin if he could reap some personal benefit for the act. Brahmā promised him that, a part of the benefit of the sacrifice (*Makha*) should go to the termite. The promise of *Brahmā* pleased the termites, and they did their job entrusted to him. The termites at once chewed through the bow tip of Viṣṇu, the upper arm of the bow rose up with a tremendous sound. The gods were terrified, all the universe was shocked, the earth began to tremble, the oceans were overflowing. Moreover, the head of Viṣṇu was out from the trunk rose high up into the sky. It seems as though the grim and strange at the same time has been introducing us a dramatic presentation. According to *Nāṭyaśāstra*, *rasa* is a synthetic phenomenon and the goal of any creative performance art, oratory, painting or literature. *Rasa* as a relish that of an elemental human emotion like love, pity, fear, heroism or mystery. It forms the dominant note of a dramatic piece; as tasted by the audience. *Rasa* may be said to be the original emotion transfigured by aesthetic delight<sup>5</sup>.

The *Devi-Bhāgavata*'s account of Viṣṇu's beheading is based upon the story of *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*<sup>6</sup>, wherein Viṣṇu is identified with the *makha* or sacrifice. Once the gods, wanted to perform a sacrifice (*Satra*) to attain excellence and glory (*Yaśaṣkāma*). They performed the sacrifice with an agreement of share the result of performance among themselves. Among the gods, *Yajña-Viṣṇu* or *Makha-Viṣṇu* was the first became glorious with the fame. Thus, he violated the agreement carried the whole credit of the sacrifice with him. He stood and rested his head on the end of the bow. The gods wanted to do something against *makha-viṣṇu*, got the tightened string

of the bow bitten off by termites, then immediately the ends of the bow springing asunder cut off Viṣṇu's head.

Returning to the story of Viṣṇu's beheading we see that when the awful darkness subsided, Brahmā and Śiva made out the disfiguring body of Viṣṇu. Seeing the unexpected outcome, the gods were surprised and wondered—"Māyeyam kasya devasya yayā tehadya śiro hṛtam"<sup>7</sup>. Here it is noted that māyā whether as personified goddess, is under the control of Viṣṇu and he is repeatedly mentioned to as Māyeśa, but in the *Devī-Bhāgavata's* story the discussion of māyā set up the goddess herself who is ultimately responsible for the dreadful occurrence, i.e., the decapitation of the Supreme Lord. Moreover, of same consideration, she knows how to restore Viṣṇu's head. The devas were also afflicted as they realised they were responsible for this beheading of Lord<sup>8</sup>. They suffered in remorse and the sense of guilt brunt them. Then a discussion ensued on what could be done to overcome this critical condition and quickly to evolve into a debate over the relative strength of fate v/s human efforts<sup>9</sup>. To side with the fate, Brahmā argued that every embodied being must experience pain and pleasure, giving several instances of bodily mishaps that had involved even gods themselves. His head, through the force of time, was once cut off by Śiva; Śiva's penis fell off through a curse, and Indra's body had had a thousand vulvas imprinted on it. Similarly, now Viṣṇu's head fall into the salt ocean<sup>10</sup>. After that, Brahmā ordered the Vedas to praise Devī in the form of Mahāmāyā for solving this problem. The *Devī* refers herself as *Brahmavādinī* as because she knows Brahmanvidyā- '*Brahmanvidyām jagaddhātṛīm sarveṣāṃ jananīm tathā*'<sup>11</sup>. This account lead us back to the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa where we discover that in the result of beheading sacrifice, when the gods were continuing fruitless endeavour with the *makha*, there was the sage Dadhyaṅc who knew how to restore its head. The secret knowledge revealed by the horse-headed sage Dadhyaṅc to the Aśvins and played the part of fixing the head to beheaded Makha-Viṣṇu. This esoteric teaching of Dadhyaṅc came to be widely known as Brahmanvidyā<sup>12</sup>, mystical knowledge of supreme Brahman. It seems that there is no mere coincidence in the *Devī-Bhāgavata*, while Brahmā asks the Vedas to praise Devī, and Devī here not only takes the role of Dadhyaṅc as the revealer of the secret knowledge (Brahmanvidyā), becomes known as the Brahmanvidyā itself<sup>13</sup>. Here we have seen that the revelatory deed has fallen to the Devī and his equine aspect arise in the Lord Viṣṇu. This accordance between Dadhyaṅc and Viṣṇu is exposed by the fate of their severed head.



The Devī then told devas the reason behind Viṣṇu's beheading and how to revitalise him. Devī provides two basic reasons for explaining the beheading of Lord Viṣṇu. The first concerns the curse given by *Mahā-Lakṣmī* is the cause for this happening. Once, Viṣṇu looking on her beautiful face and smiled, without any reason. Mahā-Lakṣmī was thinking that Viṣṇu had chosen another fair-complexioned woman to be a co-wife. She became angry and cursed Viṣṇu that his head should be severed from his body—'*Idam patatu te śirah*'<sup>14</sup>. This curse is symbolically explained that the immediate cause of the curse is due to the *tāmasī śakti*'s entering *Mahā-Lakṣmī*. The *tāmasī-śakti* is a manifestation of the Devī, and Mahā-Lakṣmī might have cursed unwittingly because of the influence of Devī and for also serving a universal divine purpose as the destruction of the demon Hayagrīva.

The Devī gives following account of demon *Hayagrīva*, which also provide the second major reason Viṣṇu's beheading motif. In the past, a demon called *Hayagrīva*, who had taken a boon from her, after a strong penance on the banks of the *Sarasvatī* river. He meditated on Devī as *tāmasī-śakti* with the *Bīja mantra*. Eventually, Devī appeared before him, pleased with his *tapas* ready to grant him a boon. He then requested the boon of immortality, but the Devī refused and asked *Hayagrīva* to request another boon, and then he replied with a request that he could be killed only by *Hayagrīva*<sup>15</sup>. Here it is noted that the boons which received by the *Hayagrīva*, similar to those received by *Hiranyakaśipu*<sup>16</sup>. Some scholar identified the demon Hayagrīva as a horse headed one, but there is no information about the demon Hayagrīva as a horse-headed one merely known by the name Hayagrīva. Devī continuing her story surprisingly characterised Hayagrīva as *duṣṭātmā* (evil-natured) despite his earlier devotion.

As portrayed before, accordingly ordered by Devī, *Visvakarmā* fixes a horse's head on Viṣṇu's beheaded body, so that he could kill the demon. Since then Lord Viṣṇu was known as *Hayagrīva*. Then Viṣṇu *Hayagrīva* went and killed the demon *Hayagrīva*. The *Devībhāgavata* notes in closing, Hari became Hayagrīva through the grace of Mahāmāyā — '*Hayagrīvo harirjāto mahāmāyā prasādatah*'<sup>17</sup>. *Devī-Bhāgavata* has combined the two *Hayagrīva* in a single myth and frequently refers to Viṣṇu as *Hayagrīva*, the same name used for the demon. R.H.van Gulik mentions to synthesising the account of *Devībhāgavata* as "one of those paradoxical combinations, much beloved by Indians: *Hayagrīva* kills *Hayagrīva*"<sup>18</sup> in this context he also refers the ancient story of so-



called *Rāma-Rāma* battle or *Rāmarāma*vivāda. The *Rāma-Rāma* battle involves two forms of divine, while the *Hayagrīva-Hayagrīva* battle concerns the divine and the demonic, which is the general perspective of *Devībhāgavata*. *Hayagrīva Viṣṇu*, one of the two *Hayagrīva* is divine by nature, and another one is reflected as demonic nature. The two *Hayagrīva* suggest a parallelism between and intermixture paradoxical combinations<sup>19</sup>. The demon *Hayagrīva*, who is *tāmasīc* by nature acts in a *sāttvīc* manner worshipping Devī. On the other hand, Lord Viṣṇu, *sāttvīc* by nature often engages in *tāmasīc* activity, this theme developed at later in the Purāṇas and intended to emphasise *Viṣṇu's* complication in the material qualities or *Guṇas* of the world.

Two important factors confirm the significance of Viṣṇu in the horse-headed form. In a general way nothing happens in this world without a cause. This appearance is caused by a curse given to *Viṣṇu*. This *purāṇic* explanation of puzzling situation has not only fulfilled the purpose of *Mahā-Lakṣmī's* curse but also became beneficent for the world due to the killing of the demon *Hayagrīva* who bagged a boon from *Devī* only to be killed by *Hayagrīva*. The mythological narrative of *Viṣṇu Hayagrīva* reveals many of the basic strategies of the *Devī-bhāgavata* in its abasement of *Viṣṇu*. The beheading concept was carrying from the early Vedic myth followed by later Brāhmaṇic myth (*Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*) and then Purāṇic myth, specifically in "*The Devī-Bhāgavata*". Later on, it expanded with typical reasoning and fantasy, also including the stories relating to the curse of *Mahā-Lakṣmī* and relating to the promise in the form of a boon given by *Devī's* worshipper, the demon *Hayagrīva*. These two important events are connected with the main story in which *Devī* played an important and glorious role.

#### Notes & References:

<sup>1</sup> The word *Hayagrīva* means Horse-headed one. 'Haya' is Horse and 'grīva' means the head with the neck.

<sup>2</sup> Viṣṇu is identified with Makha or Yajña—'Yajña vai Viṣṇu'. In different Vedic texts we come across a story regarding the loss of Yajña-Viṣṇu's head its replacement done by Aśvin.

<sup>3</sup> *Devī-Bhāgavata*, 1.5.12.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, 1.5.20.

<sup>5</sup> Wallace Dace 1963, pp. 249-250.

<sup>6</sup> *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. XVI.1.1.1 ff.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*. 1.5.34.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, 1.5.36.

<sup>9</sup> Brown. C. Mackenzie. *The Triumph of the Goddess*. p. 41.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*, 1.5. 43-47.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid*, 1.5.49

<sup>12</sup> In the Madhukāṇḍa of the *Bṛhadāraṇyak Upaniṣad* (II.5.16-19) identified with Dadhyañc's sweet teaching. Śaṅkara, in his commentary divides Dadhyañc's teachings into two parts. One deals with Pravargya ceremony and the other with Brahmavidyā, the knowledge of supreme Brahman.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid*. Brown. C. Mackenzie . p. 45.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*. 1.5.80.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid*, 1.5.100.

<sup>16</sup> Van Gulik, R.H. *Hayagriva : The Mantrayanic Aspect of Horse Cult in China and Japan*. p.18.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*. 1.5.109.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid*. Van Gulik, R.H. p.19.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid*. Brown. C. Mackenzie. p. 47-48



# LORD HAYAGRĪVA IN SANSKRIT LITERATURE

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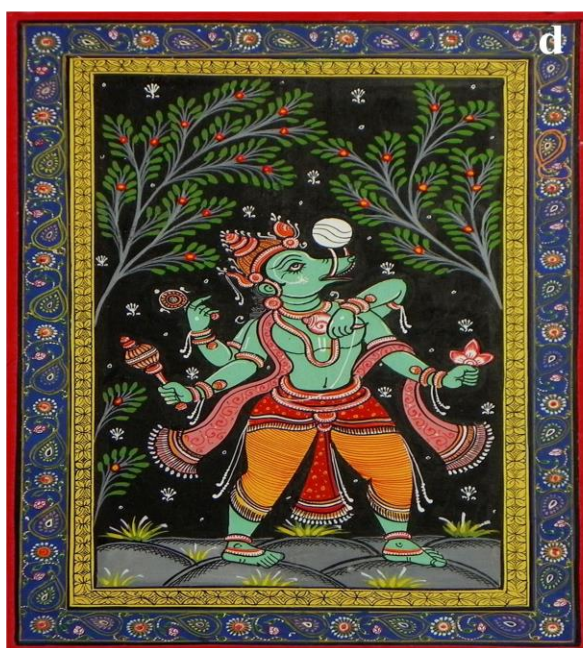
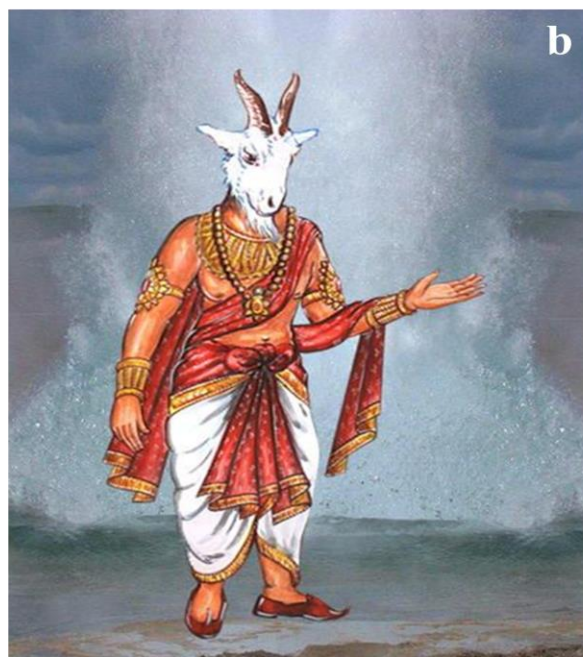
**Plate: I**  
**Several instances of animal human forms in the world myths**



- a) Half goat half man Greek god Pan  
<http://01greekmythology.blogspot.com/2013/11/pan.html>
- b) Jackal headed Egyptian god Anubis  
<https://www.crystalinks.com/anubis.html>
- c) Lion headed Egyptian goddess Sekhamet  
<https://www.etsy.com/hk-en/listing/512171972/ancient-egyptian-art-print-goddess>
- d) Centaur mythical figure of Greek with a human torso on horse hindquarters  
<https://mythology.net/greek/greek-creatures/centaur/>



Plate: II (A)  
Various animal human forms in Indian myth



- a) Elephant headed Ganeśa  
(<https://in.pinterest.com/pin/850547079596251186/?lp=true>)
- b) Goat-headed Dakṣa  
(<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00381-008-0733-2>)
- c) Boar-headed goddess Vārāhī  
(<https://www.srimeru.org/varahi/>)
- d) Boar-headed Varāha avatāra of Viṣṇu  
(<https://www.dollsofindia.com/product/folk-art-paintings/varaha-avataar-third-incarnation-of-lord-vishnu-orissa-pata-painting-on-patti-OI12.html>)



Plate: II (B)



- e) Lion-headed Nṛsimha avatāra of Viṣṇu  
<https://www.exoticindiaart.com/product/paintings/narasimha-avatar-of-vishnu-with-prahlada PE91/>  
 f) Horse-headed Hayagrīva avatāra of Viṣṇu  
 (Hand drawn Image by SB Bonu)



Plate: III



a) Main gateway of the Hayagrīva Mādhava temple

b) Big pond known as Mādhava Pukhuri or Viṣṇu Puṣkara

([https://www.google.co.in/imgres?imgurl=http://panchatirthahajo.weebly.com/uploads/8/1/3/0/81304768/bisnupushkar-pukhuri\\_orig.jpg&imgrefurl=http://panchatirthahajo.weebly.com/&docid=5X1aKfFIP4JwsM&tbnid=pjDRIsM4NxyItM:&vet=1&w=1024&h=541&source=sh/x/im](https://www.google.co.in/imgres?imgurl=http://panchatirthahajo.weebly.com/uploads/8/1/3/0/81304768/bisnupushkar-pukhuri_orig.jpg&imgrefurl=http://panchatirthahajo.weebly.com/&docid=5X1aKfFIP4JwsM&tbnid=pjDRIsM4NxyItM:&vet=1&w=1024&h=541&source=sh/x/im))

Plate: IV



a) Garbhagrha of Hayagrīva-Mādhava temple



**Plate: V (A)**  
**Some Exhibit Sculptures of the Temple Wall**



- a) Varāha
- b) Narasiṃha
- c) Rāma
- d) Elephant base molding at the temple



Plate: V (B)



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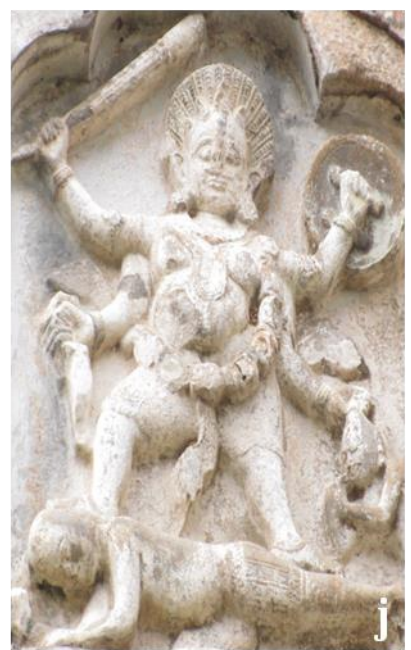
g



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i



j

- e) Viṣṇu
- f) Buddha
- g) Agni
- h) Kubera and his consorts
- i) Yama
- j) Kālī



Plate: VI



- a) Doul or Dome
- b) Long stony stairs at the north side of the temple
- c) Inscription engraved in the temple wall
- d) Nāṭṁmandir



## Plate: VII



**a)** Hayagrīva Mādhava in the middle, Dvitiya Mādhava in his left side and the Garuḍa in his extreme left. Calanta Mādhava in his right side and Bāsudeva in his extreme right. (According to the priests)  
**b)** Two priests of the temple



# **CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION**



In the religious and spiritual history of India the Sanskrit scriptures have played an impressive role to trace the fundamental concept of the nation's thought, belief and culture. A detailed and investigative study of the Vedic, Purāṇic and Tāntrik literature is necessary for furtherance of the concept. The cultural tradition of India has encompassed the entire natural phenomenon and has given due space to both animal and human in the day to day activities, the rituals, ceremonies, folktales, myths and tradition. Since the Vedas have been the source of our cultural tradition, it was felt necessary to investigate how far the materials relating to Hayagrīva were available in the Vedas and the how the concept of Hayagrīva had taken different forms in the succeeding periods.

Throughout the study emphasis has been accorded to the symbolical, mythological, iconographical, and ritualistic transformation in respect of origin and development of Lord Hayagrīva in Sanskrit literature.

To unveil the truth a due survey of the genre of the *Samhitā*, *Brāhmaṇa*, *Āraṇyaka* and *Upaniṣad* under the sphere of the Vedic literature was made which led us to the origin of the symbolic concept of Hayagrīva in the Vedic literature. In the *Ṛgveda Samhitā*, mention of *sūryāśva*, the horse of the sun god symbolizes speed and light energy of the material science. The divine horse is sometimes called Dadhikrā, Tārksya, Paidva and Garutman. In this *Samhitā* we also come across the incident of beheading of the original head of sage Dadhyaṅc and transplanting of a horse head on the headless body of sage Dadhyaṅc in a myth. This beheading motif has expanded to the Brāhmaṇa literature with a similar account of beheading of Yajña Viṣṇu. The concept of Hayagrīva has sprouted in Vedic anthropomorphism with its

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symbolic expression of horse as the sun or the sun steed and its relationship between with the solar god Viṣṇu is also available in the *Ṛgveda Samhitā*. Lord Hayagrīva is actually a symbol, a purely symbolic incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu that symbolises energy, speed, power, intelligence and knowledge. This concept gradually expanded to the prominent *Brāhmaṇas* and *Āraṇyakas*. In the *Āraṇyaka* literature the concept developed as a deity and subsequently that developed to a full-fledged divine, supreme form in the *Hayagrīvopaniṣad*. In the *Hayagrīvopaniṣad* Hayagrīva Viṣṇu, the presiding deity of the supreme knowledge and wisdom is reflected to symbolize the free, the indefinable, unembodied, absolute Brahman.

With the development of the symbol-worship in the Vedic period, the concept of Hayagrīva in its symbolic form was dormant. It spreaded its wings and gradually emerged as a glorified form in the myths of the great epic *Mahābhārata*, where Hayaśira with its very name appears for the first time. As we gradually traverse the mythological narratives of Lord Hayagrīva in the purāṇic literature, his role as the retriever and redeemer is formed. His *avatāric* forms established in the *vaiṣṇava purāṇas*, the contradictory divine and demonic forms, the amplitude of iconographical descriptions as well as His idol worship, are also found. In the *vaiṣṇava* tradition of religion, Lord Hayagrīva occupies an exalted position but in the *śākta* tradition of religion, Hayagrīva occupies a completely different secondary role, with all pervading Devī as the supreme *yogamāyā*. Various aspects of Hayagrīva were realized from our investigation such as, this benevolent form, supreme form, god form, the contradictory divine and demonic forms and the good with demonic instinct and the evil with good instinct.

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The luminous form of Lord Hayagrīva as the supreme knowledge and his worship being rewarded with intelligence, has been elucidated in the *purāṇas*. He is generally worshipped with great fervour and His blessings are sought by the devotees. He, not only protects all types of creatures of the world, but is also known to have imparted knowledge to goddess Sarasvatī herself, the presiding deity of learning and all types of fine arts. Thus it is realised that without His grace, no one can obtain knowledge.

Thus, surrounding the mythological character of Lord Hayagrīva a cult had started its journey. Ultimately the notion developed to such an extent that when we come to the Tāntrik literature, we find Lord Hayagrīva to be owned by both the Hindu and the Buddhist Tantra. Even the relationship between Hayagrīva and Gautama Buddha is being established in the Buddhist system.

To realize how the extent of the Hayagrīva concept, its beliefs, tradition and culture have impacted the real life, we intended to include a study in respect of the worship of this indomitable form in the various temples of India. A visit to one of the nearest temples, a temple in Assam near our state Tripura, added excitement, zeal and nurture to the quest. In the Hayagrīva Mādhava Temple in *Hājo, Assam*, He is not only the *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, but also highly honored and worshipped in vivid reality, so much so that He has become a living deity in the heart of his followers.

Indian spiritual tradition has established that the highest goal of human life is attainment of the state of Unqualified Brahman. But in attaining this path of renunciation it never denies the importance of material requirements in

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human life. That is why the Veda advises for learning of the two *vidyās*, *parā* and *aparā*—

“Dve vidye veditavya iti ha sma yad bahmavido vadanti parā caivāparā ca//”<sup>1</sup>

In fact the Supreme Brahman has two forms, *parā* and *aparā*. While the *aparā vidyā* is of the nature of *kārya*, effect, having the manifested form of the Supreme Brahman as this entire creation including the form of Lord Hayagrīva, the *parā vidyā* is in reality the Supreme Brahman Himself, the eternal cause of all causes, the very unbounded central power, the vital force of the entire creation having no manifested form at all—

“Na sandrśe tiṣṭhati rūpamasya/ na cakṣuṣā paśyati kaścanainam//”<sup>2</sup>

These two aspects of Indian spirituality adumbrated by our eternal scriptures appear to have greatly influenced the concept of Lord Hayagrīva reflected in Sanskrit literature.

The concept of Hayagrīva that originated in the mystical symbolism in the Vedic literature, has evolved throughout the entire Epic and Purāṇic literature and still prevails in the *Garbhagṛha* of the Hayagrīva Mādhava temple in the north-east state of Assam under the veil of darkness revealing the Tāntrik influence.

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<sup>1</sup> *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*, 1.4.

<sup>2</sup> *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad*, 4.20.

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Hence our effort accommodates a fresh and significant contribution to the domain of knowledge in the academic world. Various aspects of Hayagrīva such as, the benevolent supreme god form, the contradictory divine and demonic forms, the good with demonic instinct and the evil with good instinct could be realised through the study. Realizing the immense potential of energy both good and evil, one needs to understand the potential of knowledge for spiritual upliftment of mind and soul. The spiritual tradition of India, no doubt, has been enriched by the significant conception of Lord Hayagrīva reflected in the ancient Sanskrit texts.

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